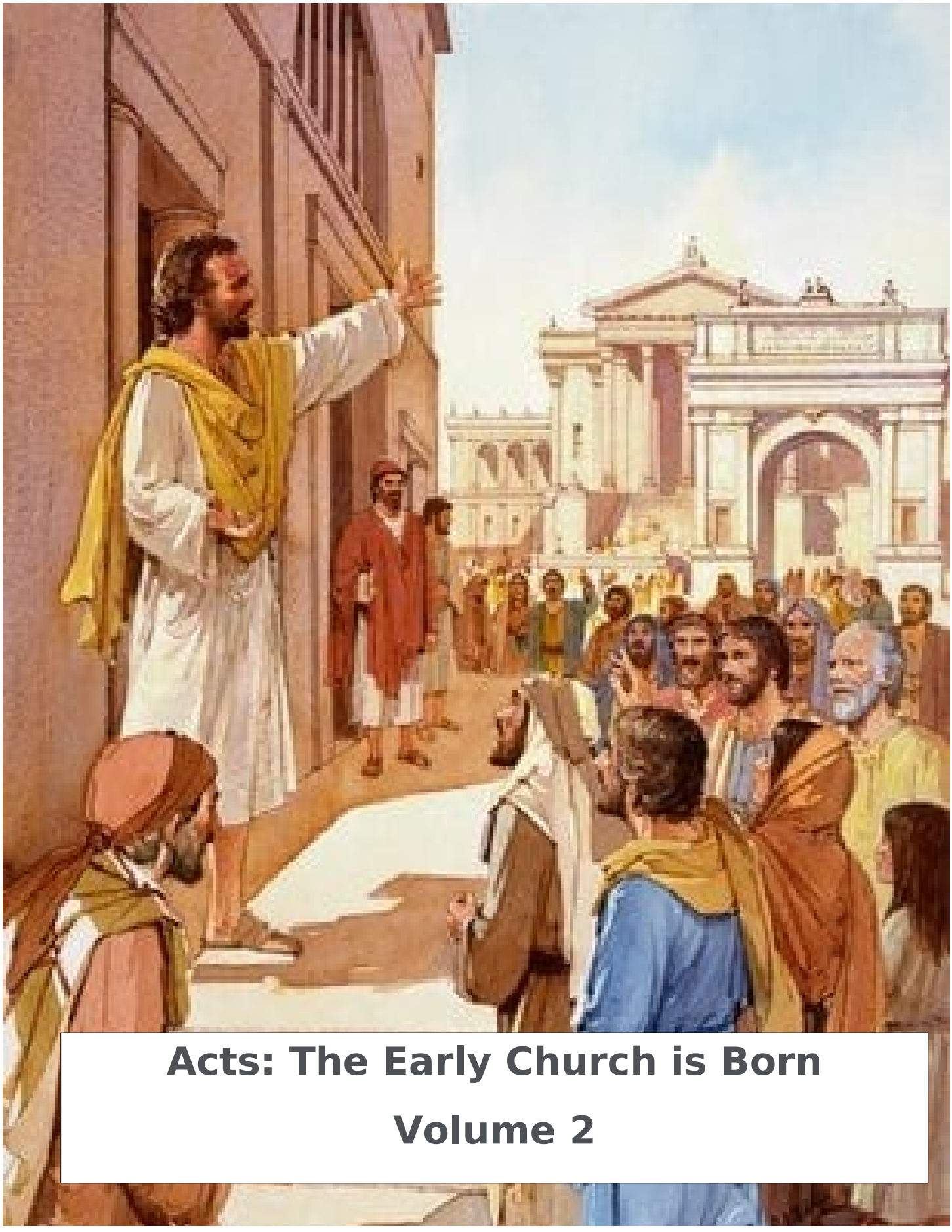


Acts: The Early Church is Born

Volume 2

The Book of Acts

Acts Chapter 11....3
Peter Reports to the Church....3
The Flagship Church in Antioch....8
Antioch of Syria....10
Antioch of Pisidia....10
Barnabas and Saul Work Together in Antioch....12
Famine Relief for Jerusalem....17
Acts Chapter 12....19
Herod Agrippa I....22
Peter is Rescued....25
The Death of Herod....33
Acts Chapter13....37
Ministry in the Cities of Seleucia, Salamis and Paphos....40
On the Island of Cyprus: The City of Salamis, on the East Coast....40
The Resistance of Elymas the Sorcerer....41
The Sermon at Pisidian Antioch....44
The Response to the Sermon at Pisidian Antioch....47
Acts Chapter 14....49
Paul and Barnabas at Lystra....52
Witnessing....55
Paul Stoned at Lystra....60
Acts Chapter 15....62
Problem Solving In the Church at Large....64
The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers....67
The Council of Jerusalem Part 1....67
The Council of Jerusalem Part 2....71
Paroxysm....76
Galatians and James....79
Acts Chapter 16....80
Guidance....80
Paul’s Second Missionary Journey....84

The Conversion of Lydia....86
Understanding the Background....86
Paul and Silas in Prison....89
The Philippian Jailer Converted....90
Paul and Silas....91
Acts Chapter 17....94
Personal Application....94
Idolatry....98
The Epicureans and the Stoicks....101
Thessalonians....103
Acts Chapter 18....104
Paul Returns to Antioch....113
Providence....119
Acts Chapter 19....120
The Sons of Sceva....122
Paul’s Healings....123
A Riot at Ephesus....124
The Chronological Bible diverts to 1 and 2 Corinthians here....127
Acts Chapter 20....128
Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders....130
A Sad Goodbye....133
Acts Chapter 21....137
The Church in Tyre....140
Jewish Christians....143
Acts Chapter 22....147
Paul and the Roman Tribune....150
Paul in Roman Custody....151
Acts Chapter 23....153
Resurrection....158
Paul is Delivered from the Plot of Assassins....161
Paul arrives in Caesarea....163
Acts Chapter 24....164
Paul’s accusers state their specific charges....166
Paul’s Defence....167
Felix’s Decision in the Case....168

Evangelism.....170
Acts Chapter 25.....172
The Appeal to Caesar.....174
Paul Appeals to Caesar to Avoid a Plot Against His Life.....178
Acts Chapter 26.....182
The Response from Festus and Agrippa.....186
Acts Chapter 27.....188
Paul's Goal.....191
The Storm at Sea.....192
The Stormy Journey From Fair Havens to Malta.....193
The Shipwreck.....196
Acts Chapter 28.....196
Paul Arrives at Rome.....198

Acts Chapter 11

In this chapter we have;

Peter's necessary vindication of what he did in receiving Cornelius and his friends into the church, from the censure he lay under for it among the brethren, and their acquiescence in it.

The great success of the gospel at Antioch, and the parts adjacent.

The carrying on of the good work that was begun at Antioch, by the ministry of Barnabas first, and afterwards of Paul in conjunction with him, and the lasting name of Christian first given to the disciples there.

A prediction of an approaching famine, and the contribution that was made among the Gentile converts for the relief of the poor saints in Judea, upon that occasion.

Peter Reports to the Church

Act 11:1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. Act 11:2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Act 11:3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. Act 11:4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, Act 11:5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a

trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: Act 11:6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Act 11:7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. Act 11:8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. Act 11:9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. Act 11:10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. Act 11:11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. Act 11:12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: Act 11:13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Act 11:14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. Act 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Act 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Act 11:17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? Act 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Intelligence was brought of the happenings to the church in Jerusalem, and thereabouts, because Caesarea is not so far from Jerusalem. Some for good reasons, and some for ill-will, would spread the report of it, so that before Peter had even returned to Jerusalem the apostles and the brethren there and in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God, that is, the gospel of Christ. They received Christ, for his name is called the Word of God, Rev. 19:13. Not only that the Jews who were dispersed into the Gentile countries, and the Gentiles who were proselyted to the Jewish religion, but that the Gentiles also themselves, with whom it had hitherto been thought unlawful to hold common conversation, were taken into church-communion, that they had received the word of God.

The word of God was preached to them, which was a greater honour put upon them than they expected. Yet I wonder this should seem strange to those who were themselves commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature. But often the prejudices of pride and bigotry are held fast against the clearest discoveries of divine truth.

It was entertained and submitted to by them, which was a better work wrought upon them than they expected. It is likely they had got a notion that if the gospel were preached to the Gentiles it would be to no purpose, because the proofs of the gospel were fetched so much out of the Old Testament, which the Gentiles did not receive, they looked upon them as not inclined to religion, nor likely to receive the impressions of it, and therefore were surprised to hear that they had received the word of the Lord.

Offence was taken at it by the believing Jews. When Peter had himself come up to Jerusalem, those that were of the circumcision, those Jewish converts that still retained a veneration for circumcision, contended with him. They charged it upon him as a crime that he went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with

them, and thereby they think he has stained, if not forfeited, the honour of his apostleship, and ought to come under the censure of the church, so far were they from looking upon him as infallible, or as the head of the church that all were accountable to, and he to none.

Peter gave such a full and fair account of the matter as was sufficient, without any further argument or apology, both to justify him, and to satisfy them. He rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and laid it before them and then could ask them whether he had done wrong, for it appeared all along God's own work, and not his.

He takes it for granted that if they had rightly understood the matter they would not have contended with him, but commended him. When we see others do something which looks suspicious, instead of contending with them, we should enquire of them what grounds they went upon, and, if we have not an opportunity to do that, should ourselves put the best construction upon it that it will bear, and judge nothing before the time.

Peter is very willing to stand right in their opinion, and takes pains to give them satisfaction. He does not insist upon his being the chief of the apostles, for he was far from the thought of that supremacy which his pretended successors claim. Nor does he think it enough to tell them that he is satisfied himself in the grounds he went upon, and they need not trouble themselves about it, but he is ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him concerning the Gentiles, and why he had receded from his former sentiments, which were the same as theirs. It is a debt we owe both to ourselves and to our brethren to set those actions of ours in a true light which at first looked ill and gave offence, that we may remove stumbling-blocks out of our brethren's way.

Let us now see what Peter pleads in his own defence for the acceptance of the Gentile converts. This is a groundbreaking time, until now the Jews were the special ones and entitled in their historical bubble. His points show that he'd spent time considering how to respond.

That he was instructed by a vision no longer to keep up the distinctions which were made by the ceremonial law, he relates the vision, as we had it before. The sheet which was there said to be let down to the earth he here says came even to him, which circumstance intimates that it was particularly designed for instruction to him. We should thus see all God's discoveries of Himself, which He has made to the children of men, coming even to us, applying them by faith to ourselves. Another circumstance added here is that when the sheet came to him he fastened his eyes upon it, and considered it. If we would be led into the knowledge of divine things, we must fix our minds upon them, and consider them. He tells them what orders he had to eat of all sorts of meat without distinction, asking no questions for conscience' sake.

It was not till after the flood that man was allowed to eat flesh at all. That allowance was afterwards limited by the ceremonial law, but now the restrictions were taken off, and the matter set at large again. It was not the design of Christ to curtail us in the use of our creature-comforts by any other law than that of sobriety and temperance, and preferring the meat that endures to eternal life before that which perishes. He pleads that he was as averse to the thoughts of conversing with Gentiles, or eating of their dainties, as they could be, and

therefore refused the liberty given him, Not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has at any time entered into my mouth. But he was told from heaven that the case was now altered, that God had cleansed those persons and things which were polluted before, and therefore that he must no longer call them common, nor look upon them as unfit to be meddled with by the peculiar people, so that he was not to be blamed for changing his thoughts, when God had changed the thing.

In things of this nature we must act according to our present light, yet must not be so wedded to our opinion concerning them as to be prejudiced against further discoveries, when the matter may either be otherwise or appear otherwise, and God may reveal even this unto us.

Php 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

And so that they might be sure he was not deceived in it, he tells them it was done three times, the same command given, to kill and eat, and the same reason, because that which God hath cleansed is not to be called common, repeated a second and third time. And, further to confirm him that it was a divine vision, the things he saw did not vanish away into the air, but were drawn up again into heaven, whence they were let down.

That he was particularly directed by the Spirit to go along with the messengers that Cornelius sent. And, that it might appear that the vision was designed to satisfy him in this matter, he observes to them the time when the messengers came, immediately after he had that vision, yet, lest this should not be sufficient to clear his way, the Spirit bade him go with the men that were then sent from Caesarea to him, nothing doubting, though they were Gentiles he went to, and went with, yet he must make no scruple of going along with them.

That he took some of his brethren along with him, who were of the circumcision, that they might be satisfied as well as he, and these he had brought up from Joppa, to witness for him with what caution he proceeded, foreseeing the offence that would be taken at it. He did not act separately, but with advice, not rashly, but with due deliberation.

That Cornelius had a vision too, by which he was directed to send for Peter. He showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which bade him send to Joppa for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. See how good it is for those that have communion with God, and keep up a correspondence with heaven, to compare notes, and communicate their experiences to each other, for hereby they may strengthen one another’s faith. Peter is the more confirmed in the truth of his vision by Cornelius’s, and Cornelius by Peter’s. Here is something added in what the angel said to Cornelius, before it was, Send for Peter, and he shall speak to thee, he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do, but here it is, “He shall tell thee words whereby thou and thy house shall be saved, and therefore it is of vast concern to thee, and will be of unspeakable advantage, to send for him.”

The words of the gospel are words whereby we may be saved, eternally saved, not merely by hearing them and reading them, but by believing and obeying them. They set the salvation before us, and show us what it is, they open the

way of salvation to us, and, if we follow the method prescribed us by them, we shall certainly be saved from wrath and the curse, and be forever happy.

Those that embrace the gospel of Christ will have salvation brought by it to their families, “Thou and all thy house shall be saved, thou and thy children shall be taken into covenant, and have the means of salvation, thy house shall be as welcome to the benefit of the salvation, upon their believing, as thou thyself, even the meanest servant thou hast. This day is salvation come to this house,” Luke 19:9. Hitherto salvation was of the Jews (John 4:22), but now salvation is brought to the Gentiles as much as ever it was with the Jews, the promises, privileges, and means of it are conveyed to all nations as amply and fully, to all intents and purposes, as ever it had been appropriated to the Jewish nation.

That which put the matter past all dispute was the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentile hearers, this completed the evidence that it was the will of God that He should take the Gentiles into communion.

The fact was plain and undeniable, “As I began to speak” (and perhaps he felt some secret reluctance in his own breast, doubting whether he was in the right to preach to the uncircumcised), “presently the Holy Spirit fell on them in as visible signs as on us at the beginning, in which there could be no fallacy.” Thus God attested what was done, and declared His approval of it, that preaching is certainly right with which the Holy Spirit is given.

The apostle supposes this when he argues with the Galatians. Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Gal. 3:2.

Peter remembers a saying of his Master’s, when He was leaving them, John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. This plainly intimated, first, that the Holy Spirit was the gift of Christ, and the product and performance of his promise, that great promise which he left with them when he went to heaven. It was therefore without doubt from Him that this gift came, and the filling of them with the Holy Spirit was His act and deed. As it was promised by His mouth, so it was performed by His hand, and was a token of His favour. Secondly, that the gift of the Holy Spirit was a kind of baptism. Those that received it were baptised with it in a more excellent manner than any of those that even the Baptist himself baptised with water.

Comparing that promise, so worded, with this gift just now conferred, when the question was started, whether these persons should be baptised or not, he concluded that the question was determined by Christ himself, “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did to us, gave it to us as believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to them upon their believing in Him, what was I, that I could withstand God? Could I refuse to baptise them with water, whom God had baptised with the Holy Spirit? Could I deny the sign to those on whom He had conferred the thing signified? But, as for me, who was I? What! able to forbid God? Did it become me to control the Divine will, or to oppose the counsels of Heaven?” Those who hinder the conversion of souls withstand God.

This account which Peter gave of the matter satisfied them, and all was well. Thus, when the two tribes and a half gave an account to Phinehas and the princes of Israel of the true intent and meaning of their building themselves an

altar on the banks of Jordan, the controversy was dropped, and it pleased them that it was so, Josh. 22:30. Some people, when they have fastened a disapproval upon a person, will stick to it, though afterwards it appears ever so plainly to be unjust and groundless.

It was not so here, for these brethren, though they were of the circumcision, and their bias went the other way, yet, when they heard this, they let fall their prejudice, they held their peace, and said no more against what Peter had done, they put their hand upon their mouth, because now they perceived that God did it. Now those who prided themselves in their dignities as Jews began to see that God was staining their pride, by letting in the Gentiles to share, and to share equally, with them. And now that prophecy was fulfilled, Thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain, Zeph. 3:11.

They turned them into praises. They not only held their peace from quarrelling with Peter, but opened their mouths to glorify God for what he had done by and with Peter's ministry, they were thankful that their mistake was rectified, and that God had shown more mercy to the poor Gentiles than they were inclined to show them, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life! He hath granted them not only the means of repentance, in opening a door of entrance for His ministers among them, but the grace of repentance, in having given them His Holy Spirit, who, wherever He comes to be a Comforter, first convinces, and gives a sight of sin and sorrow for it, and then a sight of Christ and joy in Him.

It is a great comfort to us that God has exalted his Son Jesus, not only to give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins (Acts 5:31), but to the Gentiles also.

This reaction of the Christian Jews shows how significant the change was that God initiated in Acts Chapter10. The change said, to the Gentiles, "You don't have to become Jews first, and put yourself under the Law of Moses first. Repent and believe, and you can come directly to Jesus." But it also said to the Jewish followers of Jesus, "Receive your Gentile brothers and sisters as full members of the family of God. They aren't inferior to you in any way."

The objection of those of the circumcision was on the second point, not the first. They complained, you went into uncircumcised men and ate with them! At first, they were more concerned with what Peter did than with what God was doing with the Gentiles.

Those of the circumcision contended with him. When we see the reaction of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, we can see how wise it was of Peter to take six witnesses with him to Caesarea and his meeting with Cornelius (Acts 10:23 and 11:12).

Peter recognized the importance of sensing where God is going and heading that same direction, instead of trying to persuade God to go in your direction.

It is important also to note these Christians would see this was all in accord with the Scriptures. They had both the word of the Lord Jesus, recorded and the Old Testament promises that Gentiles would come to the Lord through the Messiah. *Isa 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to*

raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

There are many today who look at some work or another and say, “Look what God is doing.” But activity alone isn’t enough to validate a work of God. It must also be in line with God’s Word. This work among the Gentiles passed both tests.

They became silent: The Jewish believers in Jerusalem (those of the circumcision) first reacted with a stunned silence. But then they glorified God, because they saw He was now at work among the Gentiles.

This is a powerful passage, demonstrating that the hearts of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were soft enough to be guided and corrected by God. It is a glorious thing when God’s people will allow their prejudices and traditions to be overcome by God’s Word and God’s work.

The church in Jerusalem embraced these Gentile believers at first, but it would be a long time until all the objections of those of the circumcision were answered, this will come up again and again!

The Flagship Church in Antioch.

We leave Peter in Jerusalem and pick up with our friends Barnabas and Paul.

Act 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. Act 11:20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. Act 11:21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Act 11:22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Act 11:23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. Act 11:24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. Act 11:25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: Act 11:26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

We have now embarked upon what is referred to as Paul’s first missionary journey.

Remember that we have two places called Caesarea, Maritime in Israel on the Mediterranean and Philippi in Syria.

Now Antioch is just as interesting, there were apparently 16 of them, but we will only visit two of them and so we need to work out where we are to be able to go there. It is mentioned nineteen times in the Bible, so before we proceed any further we will take time to clarify which one is referred to where.

To make things more challenging for us Paul went to both. How do we know which one Luke speaks about and where we are?

Paul lived, learned and taught in Syrian Antioch for 14 years. Gal 1:21-2:

According to the Pastoral Letters, Paul suffered abuse in Antioch of Pisidia, well west of Syria. 2Ti 3:10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 2Ti 3:11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

The two cities named Antioch played important roles in the first-century Christian community. Antioch of Pisidia was one of the main stops on Paul's missionary itinerary. Further east, Antioch of Syria on the Orontes River seems to have been the cradle of early Jewish-Gentile Christianity. The New Testament writings only mention the first Antioch in passing, and Paul wrote no existing letters to the churches in either city. But Paul's Letter to the Galatians and Luke's Acts of the Apostles offer tantalizing clues about early Christian debates among communities in the second Antioch. With these literary clues, scholars attempt to reconstruct the first-century Jewish community in Antioch of Syria. They especially want to know what role the Jews of Antioch played in transmitting Jesus' message to the Gentiles.

New Testament writings refer to Antioch of Syria and Antioch of Pisidia who refused to give up their Scriptures or their piety, many had fled Jerusalem. Some went south to Egypt, others went north to Syria, ironically, to seek refuge in the city fortified by the same Antiochus IV. Today Antioch of Syria sits on the border between Turkey and Syria, and the festival of Hanukkah remembers Jewish suffering under Antiochus IV. You can read about him and the Jewish persecution in Maccabees. Two centuries later, the Diaspora Jewish community of Antioch flourished. Here, in Antioch of Syria, Paul stopped persecuting Christian Jews and learned about Jesus from Christian teachers, many from Jewish families that had survived Antiochus IV. Paul then launched his travelling ministry from Antioch of

Syria and travelled west, stopping in Antioch of Pisidia, where he preached in synagogues, recruited patrons, and angered the leaders of the city.

In New Testament times, both cities called Antioch were thriving Roman colonies with significant Jewish populations.

Antioch of Syria

Let's split the two Antiochs out and begin with Antioch of Syria.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTaYMZBwqfo

The larger of the two, Antioch of Syria, sat on the Orontes River on the trade route between China in the east and Rome in the west. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus described Antioch of Syria as the third-largest city in the Roman Empire (War 3.2.4 #29).

The Roman emperors favoured the city from the first moment, seeing it as a more suitable capital for the eastern part of the empire than Alexandria could be, because of the isolated position of Egypt. To a certain extent they tried to make it an eastern Rome. Julius Caesar visited it in 47 BC, and confirmed its freedom.

At one time, this Hellenistic city was one of the largest in the Roman world. During the time of the New Testament, Antioch was a centre of commerce and an important political power in the Roman Empire. Though Antioch is hundreds of miles from Jerusalem, a significant Jewish population had already developed there by the second century B.C.E., becoming a powerful population in the city. In the second half of the first century B.C.E., Herod the Great paved the main streets of Antioch with marble.

The events we are currently studying in Acts Chapter 11 are based in Antioch Syria.

Antioch of Pisidia

Antiochia in Pisidia or Pisidian Antioch (and in Roman Empire, Latin: *Antiochia Caesareia* or *Antiochia Colonia Caesarea)*, was a city in the Turkish Lakes Region, which was at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, Aegean and Central Anatolian regions, and formerly on the border of Pisidia and Phrygia, hence also known as Antiochia in Phrygia. The city was on a hill with its highest point of 1236 m in the north.

According to tradition the city dates back to the 3rd century BCE, founded by the Seleucid Dynasty, one of the Hellenistic kingdoms. But the history of the city cannot be separated from the history of the Lakes Region and of Pisidia.

After the death of Alexander the Great, Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the Seleucid Dynasty, took control of Pisidia. Captured places were Hellenised and, in order to protect the population, fortified cities were founded at strategically important places, usually on an acropolis. Seleucus I Nicator founded nearly 60 cities and gave to 16 of them the name of his father Antiochus. Colonists were brought from Magnesia on the Maeander to people the city of Pisidian Antioch (the Land of Antiochus).

Meanwhile, fights for the sharing of Anatolia continued, complicated by the arrival of Galatians from Europe. The self-interested Hellenistic dynasties could not expel the Galatians from the interior, but Antiochus I Soter fought against them in 270 BC in the Taurus Mountains and defeated them by the help of elephants, which the Galatians had never seen before. The historian Lucian reported the comment of Antiochos, "It's a great shame that we owe our liberation to 16 elephants". Anyway, Antiochos celebrated his victory when he returned to Syria and was given the title of "Soter" (Saviour).

Although Anatolia was dominated by the Roman Empire as the province of Asia, Pisidia was given to the Kingdom of Cappadocia, which was an ally of Rome. During the ensuing years, the authority gap remained in these kingdoms so remote from central control, which led to the rise of powerful pirate kingdoms, especially in Cilicia and Pisidia. The Romans were disturbed by these kingdoms and fought against them. By 102 BC, Cilicia, Pamphylia, Phrygia and Pisida had been freed from pirates and Roman rule was restored.

The geographical and strategic position of the region made it difficult to control the area and maintain constant peace. The Homonadesians settled in the Taurus Mountains between Attaleia and Ikonion, which caused problems for Rome. Marcus Antonius, who had to control the roads connecting Pisidia to Pamphylia, charged his allied king Amyntas, King of Pisidia, to fight against Homonadesians, but Amyntas was killed during the struggle.

Paul the Apostle and Barnabas visited Antioch of Pisidia in the course of Paul's first missionary journey, and Paul's sermon in the Jewish synagogue there caused a great stir among the citizens as we will see, but the ensuing conflict with the Jews led to the expulsion of the two Christian missionaries from the city. They returned later and appointed elders for the Christian community there. Paul also visited the region in both his second and his third journeys.

So we know where we are which is in Syria.

We see the message is being sadly restricted!

Act 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

The church in Antioch grows as Gentiles turn to the Lord.

The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

At first, Christians scattered over the Roman Empire preached only to Jews. But they eventually began to preach Jesus Christ to Gentiles as well.

Some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene…spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. These unnamed disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene are genuine heroes. They began the first mentioned "mission to the Gentiles" (here called Hellenists) in Antioch. In Antioch, we have the first example of Christians deliberately targeting Gentiles for evangelism, and this effort had great results (a great number believed and turned to the Lord).

Antioch was known for its business and commerce, for its sophistication and culture, but also for its immorality.

The city's reputation for moral laxity was enhanced by the cult of Artemis and Apollo at Daphne, five miles distant, where the ancient Syrian worship of Astarte and her consort, with its ritual prostitution, was carried on." (Bruce)

According to Hughes, when the ancient Roman senator Juvenal wanted to describe the decadence of Rome, he said that "The Orontes has flowed into the Tiber," flooding Rome with wickedness.

One might say that Jerusalem was all about religion, Rome was all about power, Alexandria was all about intellect, and Athens was all about philosophy. Adding to that, one might say that Antioch was all about business and immorality.

When the Gospel came to Cornelius and he became a follower of Jesus, it came to a man who was already a God-fearer. He had a respect for the God of Israel and lived a moral life. When it came to Antioch, it came to an utterly pagan city.

Barnabas and Saul Work Together in Antioch.

Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. Barnabas remembered his precious brother Saul, and how he was sent to Tarsus for his own protection (Acts 9:28-30). Now Barnabas went and found him.

It's not difficult to think of Barnabas being exhausted and overwhelmed by all the work and opportunities in Antioch, and then remembering Paul of Tarsus.

And it was then for a whole year that they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. Together, Barnabas and Paul taught a great many people, making the church in Antioch strong.

Paul had spent some twelve years in Tarsus since we last met him, these years were not wasted or lost, but spent in quiet ministry and preparation for future service.

In all this Antioch became a centre for great teaching and preaching. Antioch had some of the greatest preachers in the first century Barnabas, Paul, and Peter, in the second Ignatius and Theophilus, in the third and fourth Lucian, Theodore, Chrysostom, and Theordoret.

It also had great informal preaching, which is often the best kind. Acts 11:20 reminds us that they spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. This combination of great formal teaching/preaching and great informal teaching/preaching made the church community in Antioch something special and world-impacting.

The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. It wasn't until these years at the Church in Syrian Antioch that the name Christian became associated with the followers of Jesus.

· They had been called disciples (Acts 1:15).

· They had been called saints (Acts 9:13).

· They had been called believers (Acts 5:14).

· They had been called brothers (Acts 6:3).

· They had been called witnesses (Acts 5:32).

· They had been called followers of the Way (Acts 9:2).

· They would be called Nazarenes (Acts 24:5).

· Now they would be called Christians.

In Latin, the ending "ian" meant "the party of." A Christ-ian was "of the party of Jesus." Christians was sort of like saying "Jesus-ites," or "Jesus People," describing the people associated with Jesus Christ.

Also, soldiers under particular generals in the Roman army identified themselves by their general's name by adding ian to the end. A soldier under Caesar would call himself a Caesarian. Soldiers under Jesus Christ could be called Christians.

In Antioch, they probably first used the term Christians to mock the followers of Jesus. Antioch was famous for its readiness to jeer and call names, it was known by its witty epigrams. But as the people of Antioch called the followers of Jesus the "Jesus People," the believers appreciated the title so much that it stuck.

Ironside says that when he was travelling in China years ago he was frequently introduced as 'Yasu-yan. At first he did not know what the word meant, but he asked about it and learned that Yasu was the Cantonese word for Jesus, and yan was 'man.' So he was being introduced as a 'Jesus man.'" (Boice)

First called Christians can also create the idea that they were called Christians before they were called anything else. Their first identity was now to be called Christians. Today, Christians must be willing to take at least the idea of the title "Jesus People," and must also be worthy of the name. Instead of claiming any other title we should be first called Christians.

Eusebius, the famous early church historian, described a believer named Sanctus from Lyons, France, who was tortured for Jesus. As they tortured him cruelly, they hoped to get him to say something evil or blasphemous. They asked his name, and he only replied, "I am a Christian." "What nation do you belong to?" He answered, "I am a Christian." "What city do you live in?" "I am a Christian." His questioners began to get angry: "Are you a slave or a free man?" "I am a Christian" was his only reply. No matter what they asked about him, he only answered, "I am a Christian." This made his torturers all the more determined to break him, but they could not, and he died with the words "I am a Christian" on his lips. (Eusebius, Church History)

We have here an account of the planting and watering of a church at Antioch, the chief city of Syria, reckoned afterwards the third most considerable city of the empire, only Rome and Alexandria being preferred before it. It stood where Hamath or Riblah did, which we read of in the Old Testament. It is suggested that Luke, the penman of this history, as well as Theophilus, to whom he dedicates it, was of Antioch, which may be the reason why he takes more particular notice of the success of the gospel at Antioch, as also because there it was that Paul began to be famous, towards the story of whom he is hastening.

Now concerning the church at Antioch observe,

The first preachers of the gospel there were such as were dispersed from Jerusalem by persecution, that persecution which arose some years ago, at the time of Stephen's death (Acts 11:19). They travelled as far as Phenice and other places preaching the word. God suffered them to be persecuted, that thereby they might be dispersed in the world, sown as seed to God, in order to bring forth much fruit. Thus what was intended for the hurt of the church was made to work for its good, as Jacob's curse of the tribe of Levi (I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel) was turned into a blessing. The enemies designed to scatter and lose them, Christ designed to scatter and use them. Thus the wrath of man is made to praise God.

Those that fled from persecution did not flee from their work, though for the time they declined suffering, yet they did not decline service, no, they threw themselves into a larger field of opportunity than before. Those that persecuted the preachers of the gospel hoped thereby to prevent their carrying it to the Gentile world, but it proved that they spread it the sooner. Those that were persecuted in one city fled to another, but they carried their religion along with them, not only that they might take the comfort of it themselves, but that they might communicate it to others, thus showing that when they got out of the way

it was not because they were afraid of suffering, but because they were willing to reserve themselves for further service.

They pressed forward in their work, finding that the good pleasure of the Lord prospered in their hands. When they had preached successfully in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, they got out of the borders of the land of Canaan, and travelled into Phoenicia, into the island of Cyprus, and into Syria. Though the further they travelled the more they exposed themselves, yet they travelled on, grudging no pain, and dreading no perils, in carrying on so good a work, and serving so good a Master.

They preached the word to none but to the Jews only who were dispersed in all those parts, and had synagogues of their own, in which they met with them by themselves, and preached to them. They did not yet understand that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs, and of the same body; but left the Gentiles either to turn Jews, and so come into the church, or else remain as they were.

They particularly applied themselves to the Hellenist Jews, called here the Grecians, which were at Antioch. Many of the preachers were natives of Judea and Jerusalem, but some of them were by birth of Cyprus and Cyrene, as Barnabas himself was, and Simon (Mark 15:21), but had their education in Jerusalem, and these, being themselves Grecian Jews, had a particular concern for those of their own denomination and distinction, and applied themselves closely to them at Antioch.

Dr. Lightfoot says that they were there called Hellenists, or Grecians, because they were Jews of the corporation or enfranchisement of the city, for Antioch was a Syrogrecian city. To them they preached the Lord Jesus. This was the constant subject of their preaching, what else should the ministers of Christ preach, but Christ, Christ, and Him crucified, Christ, and Him glorified?

They had wonderful success in their preaching. Their preaching was accompanied with a divine power, The hand of the Lord was with them, which some understand of the power they were endued with to work miracles for the confirming of their doctrine, in these the Lord was working with them, for he confirmed the word with signs following (Mark 16:20); in these God bore them witness, Heb. 2:4. But I rather understand it of the power of Divine grace working on the hearts of the hearers, and opening them, as Lydia’s heart was opened, because many saw the miracles who were not converted, but when by the Spirit the understanding was enlightened, and the will bowed to the gospel of Christ, that was a day of power, in which volunteers were enlisted under the banner of the Lord Jesus, Ps. 110:3.

The hand of the Lord was with them, to bring that home to the hearts and consciences of men which they could but speak to the outward ear. Then the word of the Lord gains its end, when the hand of the Lord goes along with it, to write it in their heart. Then people are brought to believe the report of the gospel, when with it the arm of the Lord is revealed (Isa. 53:1), when God teaches with a strong hand, Isa. 8:11. These were not apostles, but ordinary ministers, yet they had the hand of the Lord with them, and did wonders.

An abundance of good was done. *A* great number believed, and turned unto the Lord, many more than could have been expected, considering the outward

disadvantages they laboured under, some of all sorts of people were wrought upon, and brought into obedience to Christ.

So what were the changes?

They believed, they were convinced of the truth of the gospel, and subscribed to the record God had given in it concerning His Son.

The effect and evidence of this was that they turned unto the Lord. They could not be said to turn from the service of idols, for they were Jews, worshippers of the true God only, but they turned from a confidence in the righteousness of the law, to rely only upon the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which is by faith, they turned from a loose, careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life, they turned from worshipping God in show and ceremony, to worship Him in spirit and in truth. They turned to the Lord Jesus, and He became all in all with them. This was the work of change wrought upon them, and it must be wrought upon every one of us.

The good work begun at Antioch was carried on to great effect, and the church, thus founded, grew to be a flourishing one.

I think the church at Jerusalem was excited to hear the news and sent Barnabas there, to nurse this new-born church, and to strengthen the hands both of preachers and people, and put a reputation upon the cause of Christ there.

They heard the good news, that the gospel was received at Antioch. The apostles there would have been inquisitive how the work went on in the countries about, and, it is likely, kept up a correspondence with all parts where preachers were, so that tidings of these things, of the great numbers that were converted at Antioch, soon came to the ears of the church that was in Jerusalem.

They despatched Barnabas to them with all speed, they desired him to go, and assist and encourage these hopeful beginnings. They sent him forth as an envoy from them, and a representative of their whole body, to congratulate them upon the success of the gospel among them, as matter of rejoicing both to preachers and hearers, and with both they rejoiced. He must go as far as Antioch. It was a great way, but, far as it was, he was willing to undertake the journey for a public service. It is probable that Barnabas had a particular genius for work of this kind, was active and conversable, loved to be in motion, and delighted in doing good abroad as much as others in doing good at home, and his talent lying this way, he was fittest to be employed in this work. God gives various gifts for various services.

Barnabas was wonderfully pleased to find that the gospel got ground, and that some of his countrymen, men of Cyprus were instrumental in it. When he came, and had seen the grace of God, the tokens of God’s good-will to the people of Antioch and the evidences of his good work among them, he was glad. He took time to make his observations, and not only in their public worship, but in their common conversations and in their families, he saw the grace of God among them. Where the grace of God is it will be seen, as the tree is known by its fruits, and, where it is seen, it ought to be owned. We must be glad to see the grace of God in others, and the more when we see it where we did not expect it.

He did what he could to encourage them. He exhorted them, parekalei**.** It is the same word with that by which the name of Barnabas is interpreted (Acts 4:36), hyios parakleseos, a son of exhortation; his talent lay that way, and he traded with it, let him that exhorteth attend to exhortation, Rom. 12:8. Or, being a son of consolation (for so we render the word), he comforted or encouraged them with purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. The more he rejoiced in the beginning of the good work among them, the more earnest he was with them to proceed according to these good beginnings. Those we have comfort in we should exhort.

Barnabas was glad for what he saw of the grace of God among them, and therefore was the more earnest with them to persevere and to cleave to the Lord. To cleave to the Lord Jesus is to live a life of dependence upon Him and devotedness to Him and to hold Him fast.

Hereby he gave a proof of his good character, he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, and proved himself so upon this occasion. He showed himself to be a man of a very sweet, affable, courteous disposition, that had himself the art of obliging, and could teach others. He was not only a righteous man, but a good man, a good-tempered man.

He was instrumental to do good, by bringing in those that were without, as well as by building up those that were within. Much people were added to the Lord, and thereby added to the church, many were turned to the Lord before, yet more are to be turned, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

Barnabas went to fetch Paul, to join with him in the work of the gospel at Antioch. The last news we heard of him was that, when his life was threatened at Jerusalem, he was sent away to Tarsus, the city where he was born, and, it should seem, he continued there ever since, doing good, no doubt. But now Barnabas takes a journey to Tarsus on purpose to see what had become of him, to tell him what a door of opportunity was opened at Antioch, and to desire him to come and spend some time with him there.

And here also it appears that Barnabas was a good sort of a man in two things. That he would take so many pains to bring an active useful man out of obscurity. It was he that introduced Paul to the disciples at Jerusalem, when they were wary of him, and it was he that brought him out of the corner into which he was driven, into a more public station. It is a very good work to fetch a candle from under a bushel, and to set it in a candlestick. That he would bring in Paul at Antioch, who, being a chief speaker (Acts 14:12), and probably a more popular preacher, would be likely to eclipse him there, by outshining him, but Barnabas is very willing to be eclipsed when it is for the public service. If God by his grace inclines us to do what good we can, according to the ability we have, we ought to rejoice if others that have also larger capacities have larger opportunities, and do more good than we can do.

We are told a little more about what went on at Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas continued there a whole year, presiding in their religious assemblies, and preaching the gospel.

Famine Relief for Jerusalem

Act 11:27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. Act 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Act 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Act 11:30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

A prophetic word announces a famine.

They were shown by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. We don't know exactly how Agabus showed by the Spirit that this famine was on the way. But the Christians took the word seriously and generously prepared to meet the coming need.

"We know from other sources that Claudius's principate was marked by a succession of bad harvests and consequent scarcity in various parts of the empire, in Rome, Greece, and Egypt as well as in Judaea." (Bruce)

You can tell these were truly disciples and Christians, because they gave generously to meet the need. They gave, each according to his ability.

This means that they gave according to the ability of their resources, those who had more gave more.

We also see they determined to give. If a person does not determine to give, they often never do. This is voluntary giving not forced or directed by the leadership or begged for by the recipients.

The high regard that Barnabas and Paul had among all was evident by the fact that they were trusted with the relief fund.

"As far as I know, this is the first charitable act of this nature in all recorded history, one race of people collecting money to help another people. No wonder they were first called Christians at Antioch." (Boice)

There came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch, we are not told how many, nor is it certain whether these were any of those prophets that we will soon find in the church at Antioch, Acts 13:1.

Barnabas came to exhort them, and they, having received the exhortation well and now have prophets sent to them to show them things to come, as Jesus had promised, *Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

We read of Agabus later prophesying Paul's imprisonment, Acts 21:10, 11. Here he stood up, probably in one of their public assemblies, and prophesied. What he said was not of himself, nor a fancy of his own, nor an astronomical prediction, nor a conjecture, but he signified it by the Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy, that there should be a famine, as Joseph, by the Spirit enabling him, understood Pharaoh's dreams, foretold the famine in Egypt, and Elijah the famine in Israel in Ahab's time. Thus God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets.

This should be not in one particular country, but through all the world, that is, all the Roman Empire, which they in their pride, like Alexander before them, called the world.

Christ had foretold in general that there should be famines (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11); but Agabus foretells one very remarkable famine now at hand.

And it came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Several of the Roman historians make mention of it, as does also Josephus. God sent them the bread of life, and they rejected it, loathed the plenty of that manna, and therefore God justly broke the staff of bread, and punished them with famine, and herein He was righteous. They were barren, and did not bring forth to God, and therefore God made the earth barren to them.

They made good use of this prediction. When they were told of a famine at hand, they did not do as the Egyptians and hoard up corn for themselves, but, as became Christians, laid by for charity to relieve others, which is the best preparation for our own sufferings and needs.

Psa 41:1 *To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.* Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. Psa 41:2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

The best provision we can lay up against such a time is to lay up an interest in these promises, by doing good, and communicating, Luke 12:33. Many give it as a reason why they should be sparing, but the scripture gives it as a reason why we should be liberal.

Ecc 11:1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Ecc 11:2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

What they determined was that every man, according to his ability, should send relief to the brethren that dwelt in Judea.

The persons that were recommended to them as objects for charity were the brethren that dwelt in Judea. Though we must, as we have opportunity, do good to all men, yet we must have a special regard to the household of faith, *Gal 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.* No poor must be neglected, but God's poor most particularly regarded. The care which every particular church ought to take of their own poor we were taught by the early instance of that in the church

at Jerusalem, where the ministration was so constant that none lacked, Acts 4:34.

The communion of saints in this instance is extended further, and provision is made by the church at Antioch for the relief of the poor in Judea, whom they call their brethren. It seems it was the custom of the Jews of the dispersion to send money to those Jews who dwelt in Judea, for the relief of the poor that were among them, and to make collections for that purpose (Tully speaks of such a thing in his time, *Orat. pro Flacco*), which supposes there were many poor in Judea, more than in other countries, so that the rich among them were not able to bear the cost of keeping them from starving, either because their land had become barren, though it had been a fruitful land, for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein, or because they had no traffic with other nations.

Note that Israel, Jerusalem is requesting on behalf of Judea.

What they did, they did as they determined. They not only talked of it, but they did it. Many a good motion of that kind is made and commended, but is not followed through, and so comes to nothing. But this was pursued, the collection was made, and was perhaps so considerable that they thought it worthwhile to send Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem, to carry it to the elders there.

They sent it to the elders of the churches in Judea, to be distributed by them according to the necessity of the receivers, as it had been contributed according to the ability of the givers.

It was sent by Barnabas and Paul, who perhaps wanted a reason to go to Jerusalem, and therefore were willing to take this.

Josephus tells us that at this time king Irates sent his charity to the chief men of Jerusalem, for the poor of that country, and Helena, queen of the Adiabeni, being now at Jerusalem, and hearing of many that died of famine there, and in the country about, sent for provisions from Cyprus and Alexandria, and distributed them among the people, so says Dr. Lightfoot, who also computes, by the date of Paul's rapture, "fourteen years before he wrote the second Epistle to the Corinthians" (2 Cor. 12:1, 2), that it was in this journey of his to Jerusalem, with these alms and offerings, that he had his trance in the temple (which he speaks of, Acts 22:17), and in that trance was rapt up into the third heaven, and then it was that Christ told him he would send him thence unto the Gentiles, which he did as soon as he came back to Antioch.

Acts Chapter 12

In this chapter we have the story of the martyrdom of James the apostle, and the imprisonment of Peter by Herod Agrippa, who now reigned as king in Judea, the miraculous deliverance of Peter out of prison by the ministry of an angel, in answer to the prayers of the church for him. The cutting off of Herod in the height of his pride by the stroke of an angel, the minister of God's justice, and all this was done while Barnabas and Paul were at Jerusalem, upon the errand that

the church of Antioch sent them on, to carry their charity, and therefore in the close we have an account of their return to Antioch.

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned

Act 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. Act 12:2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. Act 12:3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) Act 12:4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Act 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

Before we get into the detail we are back in Jerusalem HQ, and we hear about Herod and James, but which Herod and which James?

James the brother of John

Curiously we find that James and John are mostly referred to by their relationship (at least nine times), which I think clarifies nicely who we are speaking of here.

Mat 4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

Mat 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Mat 17:1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

So this James is one of Jesus' closest three, faithful to the end.

The question of who wrote the book of James is controversial and if James the brother of John wrote it we have strong dating, during the rule of this Herod and a lasting legacy,. The traditional view is that James, the brother of Jesus wrote the book. There is nothing in the Book of James that does not resonate with what we know about James from the book of Acts and Paul's letter to the Galatians.

There are no dates, historical events or rulers mentioned in the book of James that allow us to lock down the time and place of its creation.

I have to admit that I began my search for the author of the book of James with quite some prejudice, I so wanted the letter of James to the early Christian Jews to have been written by our friend and the disciple James Boanerges. James is one of the special three and it would be nice to see that both sons of thunder wrote for us.

The Letter of James according to the majority of scholars who have carefully worked through its text in the past two centuries, is among the earliest of the New Testament compositions. It contains no reference to the events in Jesus' life, but it bears striking testimony to Jesus' words. Jesus' sayings are embedded in James' exhortations in a form that is clearly not dependent on the written Gospels.

The content of James is directly parallel, in many instances, to sayings of Jesus which are found in the gospels of Luke and Matthew, i.e., those attributed to the hypothetical Q source, in the two-source hypothesis. Compare, for example, "Do not swear at all, either by heaven ... or by the earth ... Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one" and " ... do not swear either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No' be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation" (James 5:12). According to James Tabor, the epistle of James contains "no fewer than thirty direct references, echoes, and allusions to the teachings of Jesus found in the Q source."

The very first verse of James states his name. *Jas 1:1 James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion. Greetings!* He clearly has an understanding of the relationship between God and Jesus.

See this. Jud 1:1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

So who are our candidates for authorship?

There were two of the 12 Disciples called James and the possible are:

James the brother of John and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder:
The other Disciple called James, James the son of Alphaeus
- There is also James the brother of Jesus.
- The Apostle Paul has many interactions with a James.
- The possibility of a pseudonym of James.

So let us see who we can rule out immediately.

Act 12:1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. Act 12:2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. This to me shows the early death of James Boanerges. If the letters were written very early this does not exclude this James from the candidates, he could have written them before he was murdered.

However a few verses later we hear a message sent to James and so there is clearly another one. Act 12:17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. I believe this is the son of Alphaeus, sometimes called the brother of our Lord. It is unlikely that he did not know James had been murdered.

This James is present at the council of Jerusalem. Act 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Act 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

Supporting his role as a friend and student of Paul, James is not presenting the Gospel. He is defending the practical and ethical demands of God upon His people. The point at issue is not God's provision, but man's obligation.

Paul makes a final visit to James. *Act 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. Act 21:18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.*

James, the son of Alphaeus is a viable candidate for authorship, although he is not prominent in the scriptural record, and relatively little is known about him. Hippolytus, writing in the early third century, asserted in his work on the 12 Apostles.

And James the son of Alphaeus, was apparently when preaching in Jerusalem stoned to death by the Jews, and was buried there beside the temple.

Three times it is mentioned that Jesus had brethren. *Mat 13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?*

Mar 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

Gal 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

The issue here is whether these were literal or figurative siblings.

Accounts about James are also extant in Josephus, Eusebius, Origen, the Gospel of Thomas, the Apocalypses of James, the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Pseudo-Clementine literature, most of whom cast him as righteous and as the undisputed leader of the Jewish camp. "His influence is central and palpable in Jerusalem and in Antioch, despite the fact that he did not minister at Antioch. Although we are dependent on sources dominated by the Pauline perspective… the role and influence of James overshadows all others at Antioch."

I have been unable to rule out any of the candidates, but my instinct on this James is that he was a friend of Paul and not one of the two disciple James' of the 12 or Jesus' fleshly brother. Most of this gut feel is linked to the part James played at the Council of Jerusalem.

So we leave our brother James, known only unto God and accept his book of New Testament Wisdom with thanks.

Herod Agrippa I

This was Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, who ruled in the days of Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:1-16). Herod Agrippa I was also the nephew of Herod Antipas, who had a role in the trial of Jesus (Luke 23:7-12). Don't you just love the Roman record keeping for helping us date events!

He stretched out his hand to harass some from the church: No doubt, this was done because it was politically popular for Herod. It pleased many of his citizens who didn't like Christians. Many political figures are ready to persecute Christians if it will make them politically popular, in today/s climate it seems that whilst Islam and others are protected Christians are fair game.

Not only can we date events to within year based on Agrippa's death, we are able to date them almost to the day. Then were the days of unleavened bread and also intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

The year is AD44. So now we can look at the month info. What does this mean?

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread occur in the same time frame.

The term Easter is used in the KJV, but Passover in all other versions of the Bible.

The English term Easter is derived from the Saxon spring festival Ēostre. Easter is linked to the Jewish Passover by its name (Hebrew: פֶּסַח pesach, Aramaic: פַּסְחָא pascha are the basis of the term Pascha), by its origin (according to the synoptic Gospels, both the crucifixion and the resurrection took place during the week of Passover) and by much of its symbolism, as well as by its position in the calendar. In most European languages, both the Christian Easter and the Jewish Passover are called by the same name, and in the older English versions of the Bible, as well, the term Easter was used to translate Passover.

Herod would do this after Easter, after the Passover. Herod would not condemn Peter till the Passover was over, some think, for fear lest he should have such an interest among the people that they should demand the release of him, according to the custom of the feast. Remember Jesus and Barabbas? *Mat 27:15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.*

Horton suggests three reasons for the delay in executing Peter: (1) Herod wanted to show how scrupulously he observed the Passover; (2) he wanted to wait until the pilgrim crowds went home, fearing a riot, (3) he wanted to wait until he had the full attention of the Jewish population.

Maybe after the hurry of the feast was over, and the town was empty, he would entertain them with Peter's public trial and execution. Thus the plot was laid, and both Herod and the people long to have the feast over, that they may gratify themselves with this barbarous entertainment.

The Passover begins on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which is in March or April, and ends on the 21st or 22nd. The holiday lasts seven or eight days

Ever since the conversion of Paul, we have heard no more of the priests persecuting the saints at Jerusalem, perhaps that wonderful change wrought upon him, and the disappointment it gave to their design upon the Christians at Damascus, had somewhat mollified them, and brought them under the check of Gamaliel's advice, to let those men alone, and see what would be the issue, but here the storm arises from another point. The civil power, not now, as usual stirred up by the ecclesiastics, acts by itself in the persecution. But Herod, though originally of an Edomite family, seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion; for Josephus says he was zealous for the Mosaic rites and a bigot for the ceremonies. He was not only (as Herod Antipas was) tetrarch of Galilee, but had also the government of Judea committed to him by Claudius the emperor, and resided most at Jerusalem, where he was at this time.

Three things we are told he did:

Firstly. He stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. His stretching forth his hands to it intimates that his hands had been tied up by the restraints which perhaps his own conscience held him under in this matter, but now he broke through them, and stretched forth his hands deliberately, and with malicious intent. Herod laid hands upon some of the church to afflict them, so some read it, he employed his officers to seize them, and take them into custody, in order to enable their being prosecuted. See how he advances gradually. He began with some of the members of the church, certain of them that were of less note and figure; played first at small game, but afterwards flew at the apostles themselves. His spite was at the church, and, with regard to those he gave trouble to, it was not upon any other account, but because they belonged to the church, and so belonged to Christ. He began with vexing them only, or afflicting them, imprisoning them, fining them, spoiling their houses and goods, and other ways molesting them, but afterwards he proceeded to greater instances of cruelty. Christ's suffering servants are thus trained up by less troubles for greater, that tribulation may work patience.

Secondly. He killed James the brother of John with the sword. We need to consider who the martyr was, it was James the brother of John, so called to distinguish him from the other James the brother of Joses. This was called Jacobus major, James the greater, that, minor, the less. This was one of the first three of Christ's disciples, one of those that were the witnesses of his transfiguration and agony, whereby he was prepared for martyrdom, he was one of those whom Christ called Boanerges, Sons of thunder, and perhaps by his powerful awakening preaching he had provoked Herod, or those about him, as John Baptist did the other Herod, and that was the occasion of his coming into this trouble. He was one of those sons of Zebedee whom Christ told that they should drink of the cup that he was to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was to be baptized with, Matt. 20:23. He was one of the twelve who were commissioned to disciple all nations, and to take him off now, before he had removed from Jerusalem, was like Cain's killing Abel when the world was to be peopled, and one man was then more than many at another time. To kill an apostle now was killing he knew not how many. But why would God permit it? If the blood of his saints, is precious in his eyes, therefore, we may be sure, is not

shed but upon a valuable consideration. Perhaps God intended hereby to awaken the rest of the apostles to disperse themselves among the nations, and not to nestle any longer at Jerusalem. Or it was to show that though the apostles were appointed to plant the gospel in the world, yet if they were taken off God could do his work without them, and would do it. The apostle died a martyr, to show the rest of them what they must expect, that they might prepare accordingly.

He was slain with the sword, that is, his head was cut off with a sword, which was looked upon by the Romans to be a more disgraceful way of being beheaded than with an axe, says Lorinus. Beheading was not ordinarily used among the Jews, but, when kings gave verbal orders for private and sudden executions, this manner of death was used, as most expeditious, and it is possible that this Herod killed James, as the other Herod killed John Baptist, privately in the prison. It is strange that we have not a more full and particular account of the martyrdom of this great apostle, as we had of Stephen. But even this short mention of the thing is sufficient to let us know that the first preachers of the gospel were so well assured of the truth of it that they sealed it with their blood, and thereby have encouraged us. The Old Testament martyrs were slain with the sword (Heb. 11:37), and Christ came not to send peace, but a sword (Matt. 10:34), in preparation for which we must arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and then we need not fear what the sword of men can do unto us.

Herod imprisoned Peter, of whom he had heard most, as appearing the greatest figure among the apostles and whom therefore he would be proud of the honour of taking off. When he had beheaded James, he proceeded further, he decided, to take Peter also. Those that take one bold step in a sinful way give Satan advantage against them to tempt them to take another, and provoke God to leave them to themselves, to go from bad to worse. It is therefore our wisdom to take heed of the beginnings of sin.

He did this because he saw it pleased the Jews. The Jews made themselves guilty of the blood of James by showing themselves well pleased with it afterwards, though they had not incited Herod to it. There are accessories after the fact, and those will be reckoned with as persecutors who take pleasure in others' persecuting, who delight to see good men ill used.

Though he had no reason to fear displeasing them if he did not, as Pilate condemned Christ, yet he hoped to please them by doing it, and so to make an interest among them, and make amends for displeasing them in something else.

Next is an account of Peter's imprisonment. When he had laid hands on him, and, it is likely, examined him, he put him in prison, some say, into the same prison into which he and the other apostles were cast some years before, and were rescued out of it by an angel, Acts 5:18.

He was delivered to four quaternions of soldiers, that is, to sixteen, who were to be a guard upon him, four at a time, that he should not make his escape, nor be rescued by his friends or angels. Thus they thought they had him fast.

Peter is Rescued

Act 12:6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. Act 12:7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. Act 12:8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. Act 12:9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. Act 12:10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. Act 12:11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. Act 12:12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. Act 12:13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. Act 12:14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. Act 12:15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. Act 12:16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. Act 12:17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. Act 12:18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. Act 12:19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.

A quaternion is the name given to a company of four soldiers of Herod's army. To four such companies Peter had been handed over, who would take their turn of acting as guard over the prisoner, each of the four watches of the night according to Roman reckoning, which Herod Agrippa I would follow. In the prison Peter was closely secured, in order that Herod, who had already killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, might, after the solemnities of the Passover, make sure of his death as well. On the night before his intended execution he was sleeping in his cell between two soldiers, "bound with two chains," his left hand chained to one and his right to the other. The other two soldiers of the quaternion mounted guard before the door, and are spoken of as "the first and the second guard", whom Peter and his angel guide had to pass on the way to liberty. The Greek word thus rendered is not found in the Septuagint or anywhere else in the New Testament.

We have here an account of Peter’s deliverance out of prison, by which the design of Herod against him was defeated, and his life preserved for further service, and a stop given to this bloody torment.

One thing that magnified his deliverance was that it was an answer to prayer. Peter was kept in prison with a great deal of care, so that it was altogether impossible, either by force or by stealth, to get him out. But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him, for prayers are the church's arms, therewith she fights, not only against her enemies, but for her friends, and to these means they have recourse.

The delay of Peter's trial gave them time for prayer. It is probable that James was hurried off so suddenly and so privately that they had not time to pray for him, God so ordering it that they should not have space to pray, when he designed they should not have the thing they prayed for. James must be offered in the sacrifice and service of his faith, and therefore prayer for him is perhaps restrained and prevented, but Peter must be continued to them, and therefore prayer for him is stirred up, and time is given them for it, by Herod's putting off the prosecution.

Stephen is dead, and James is dead, and will they take Peter also? Though the death and sufferings of Christ's ministers may be made greatly to serve the interests of Christ's kingdom, yet it is the duty and concern of the church earnestly to pray for their life, liberty, and peace, and sometimes providence orders it that they are brought into imminent danger, to stir up prayer for them.

Prayer was made without ceasing, it was, proseuche ektenes, fervent prayer. It is the word that is used concerning Christ's praying in his agony more earnestly, it is the fervent prayer of the righteous man, that is effectual, and availeth much. Some think it denotes the constancy and continuance of their prayers. They prayed without ceasing. It was an extended prayer, they prayed for his release in their public assemblies (private ones, perhaps, for fear of the Jews), then they went home, and prayed for it in their families, then retired into their closets, and prayed for it there, so they prayed without ceasing or first one group of them, and then another, and then a third, kept a day of prayer, or rather a night of prayer, for him.

Another thing that magnified his deliverance was that when the king's commandment and decree drew near to be put in execution, then his deliverance was wrought. We are not told how long Peter was imprisoned, the Passover lasts one to two days, but the unleavened bread feast lasts seven days, so it could have been a while.

It was the very night before Herod designed to bring him forth, which made it to be so much the greater consolation to his friends and confusion to his enemies. It is probable some who had an interest in Herod, or those about him, had been trying to get a discharge for Peter, but in vain, Herod resolves he shall die. And now they despair of prevailing in this way, for tomorrow is the day set for the bringing of him forth and, it is likely, they will make as quick work with him as with his Master, and now God opened a door of escape for him.

God's time to help is when things are brought to the last extremity, when there is none shut up nor left (Deut. 32:36), and for this reason it has been said, "The worse the better." When Isaac is bound upon the altar, and the knife in the hand, and the hand stretched out to slay him, then Jehovah jireh, the Lord will provide.

It was when he was fast bound with two chains, between two soldiers, so that if he should move he will wake them, and, besides this, though the prison doors, no doubt, were locked and bolted,, the keepers before the door guarded the prison, that no one might so much as attempt to rescue him. Never could the art of man do more to secure a prisoner. Herod, no doubt, said, as Pilate did regarding Jesus (Matt. 27:65), make it as sure as you can. When men will think something too hard for God, God will make it appear that He is too hard for them.

It happened when he was sleeping between the soldiers, fast asleep. Not terrified of his danger, though it was very imminent, and there was no visible way for his escape. There was a step between him and death, and yet he could lay himself down in peace, and sleep, sleep in the midst of his enemies, sleep when, it may be, they were awake, having a good cause that he suffered for, and a good conscience that he suffered with, and being assured that God would issue his trial that way that should be most for His glory. Having committed his cause to him that judgeth righteously, his soul dwells at ease, and even in prison, between two soldiers, God gives him sleep, as he doth to his beloved. Not expecting deliverance, he did not keep awake, looking to the right hand, or to the left, for relief, but lay asleep, and was perfectly surprised with his deliverance.

It also magnified his deliverance that an angel was sent from heaven on purpose to rescue him, which made his escape successful. This angel brought him a legal discharge, and enabled him to make use of it.

The angel of the Lord came upon him, epeste, stood over him. He seemed as one abandoned by men, yet not forgotten of his God. Gates and guards kept all his friends from him, but could not keep the angels of God from him, and they invisibly encamp round about those that fear God, to deliver them (Ps. 34:7), and therefore they need not fear, though a host of enemies encamp against them, (Ps. 27:3). Wherever the people of God are, and however surrounded, they have a way open heavenward, nor can anything intercept their intercourse with God.

A light shone in the prison. Though it is a dark place, and in the night, Peter shall see his way clear. In the New Testament, when mention is made of the appearing of the angels, notice is taken of the light that they appeared in. The soldiers to whom Peter was chained were either struck into a deep sleep for the present (as Saul and his soldiers were when David carried off his spear and cruise of water), or, if they were awake, the appearance of the angel made them to shake, and to become as dead men, as it was with the guard set on Christ’s sepulchre.

The angel woke Peter up, by giving him a blow on his side, a gentle touch, enough to rouse him out of his sleep, so fast asleep that the light did not wake him. When good people slumber in a time of danger, and are not awakened by the light of the word, and the discoveries it gives them, let them expect to be smitten on the side by some sharp affliction, better be raised up like this than left asleep. The language of this stroke was, Arise up quickly, not as if the angel feared coming short by his delay, but Peter must not be indulged in it. When David hears the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry trees, then he must rise up quickly, and bestir himself.

His chains fell off from his hands. It seems they had handcuffed him, to make him sure, but God loosed his bands, and, if they fall off from his hands, it is just as if he had the strength of Samson to break them like threads of tow. Tradition makes a mighty fuss about these chains, and tells a formal story that one of the soldiers kept them for a sacred relic, and they were long after presented to Eudoxia the Empress, and I know not what miracles are said to have been wrought by them, and the Romish church keeps a feast on the first of August yearly in remembrance of Peter's chains, festum vinculorum Petri*,* The feast of Peter's chains, whereas this was at the Passover.

He was ordered to dress himself immediately, and follow the angel; and he did. When Peter was awake he was bewildered but did as the angel directed him.

He must gird himself, for those that slept in their clothes ungirded themselves, so that they had nothing to do, when they got up, but to fasten their girdles.

He must bind on his sandals, that he might be fit to walk. Those whose bonds are loosed by the power of divine grace must have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

He must cast his garments about him, and come away as he was, and follow the angel, and he might go with a great deal of courage and cheerfulness because he had a messenger from heaven for his guide and guard.

He went out, and followed him. Those who are delivered out of a spiritual imprisonment must follow their deliverer, as Israel when they went out of the house of bondage did, they went out, not knowing whither they went, but they did know who they followed. Now it is said, when Peter went out after the angel, he knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, that it was really a matter of fact, but thought he saw a vision, and, if he did, it was not the first he had seen, but by this it appears that a heavenly vision was so plain, and carried so much of its own evidence along with it, that it was difficult to distinguish between what was done in fact and what was done in vision. *When the Lord brought back the captivity of his people we were like those that dream*, Ps. 126:1. Peter was the same he thought the news was too good to be true.

He was led safely by the angel out of danger. Guards were kept at one pass and at another, which they were to make their way through when they were out of the prison, and they did so without any opposition, without any discovery, either their eyes were closed, or their hands were tied, or their hearts failed them, so it was that the angel and Peter safely passed the first and second ward.

Those watchmen represented the watchmen of the Jewish church, on whom God had poured out a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, Rom. 11:8. His *watchmen are blind, sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber*. But still there is an iron gate, after all, that will stop them, and, if the guards can but recover themselves, there they may recover their prisoner, as Pharaoh hoped to retake Israel at the Red Sea.

However, up to that gate they march, and, like the Red Sea before Israel, it opened to them. They did not so much as put a hand to it, but it opened of its own accord, by an invisible power, and thus was fulfilled in the letter what was

figuratively promised to Cyrus (Isa. 45:1, 2), *I will open before him the two-leaved gates, will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron*. And possibly the iron gate shut again of itself, that none of the guards might pursue Peter.

When God will work salvation for his people, no difficulties in their way are insurmountable, even gates of iron are made to open of their own accord. This iron gate led him into the city out of the castle or tower, whether within the gates of the city or without is not certain, so that, when they were through this, they were got into the street.

This deliverance of Peter represents to us our redemption by Christ, which is often spoken of as the setting of prisoners free, not only the proclaiming of liberty to the captives, but the bringing of them out of the prison-house. The application of the redemption in the conversion of souls is the sending forth of the prisoners, by the blood of the covenant, out of the pit wherein is no water, Zech. 9:11.

The grace of God, like this angel of the Lord, brings light first into the prison, by the opening of the understanding, smites the sleeping sinner on the side by the awakening of the conscience, causes the chains to fall off from the hands by the renewing of the will, and then gives the word of command, Gird thyself, and follow me. This is not the first time Peter has heard this. Difficulties are to be passed through, and the opposition of Satan and his instruments, a first and second ward, an untoward generation, from which we are concerned to save ourselves, and we shall be saved by the grace of God, if we put ourselves under the divine conduct. And at length the iron gate shall be opened to us, to enter into the New Jerusalem, where we shall be perfectly freed from all the marks of our captivity, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

When this was done, the angel departed from him, and left him to himself. He was out of danger from his enemies, and needed no guard. He knew where he was, and how to find out his friends, and therefore his heavenly guard and guide bids him farewell. Miracles are not to be expected when ordinary means are to be used. When Peter has now no more wards to pass, nor iron gates to get through, he needs only the ordinary invisible ministration of the angels, who encamp round about those that fear God, and deliver them.

F.F. Bruce relates the story of Sundar Singh, a Tibetan Christian who was likewise freed miraculously from a prison. For preaching of the gospel, he was thrown into a well, and a cover set over it and securely locked. He would be left in the well until he died, and he could see the bones and rotting corpses of those who had already perished in there. On the third night of his imprisonment, he heard someone unlocking the cover of the well and removing it. A voice told him to take hold of the rope that was being lowered.

Sundar was grateful that the rope had a loop he could put his foot in, because he had injured his arm in the fall down into the well. He was raised up, the cover was replaced and locked, but when he looked to thank his rescuer he could find no one. When morning came, he went back to the same place he was arrested and started preaching again. News of the preaching came to the official who had him arrested, and Sundar was brought before him again. When the official said

someone must have gotten the key and released him, they searched for the key, and found it on the official's own belt. God is still writing the Book of Acts!

We are told how Peter came to himself. So many strange and surprising things coming together upon a man just awoke out of sleep put him for the present into some confusion so that he knew not where he was, nor what he did, nor whether it was fancy or fact, but at length Peter came to himself, was thoroughly awake, and found that it was not a dream, but a real thing.

Now I am well satisfied concerning it that the Lord Jesus hath sent His angel, for angels are subject to Him and go on His errands, and by Him hath delivered me out of the hands of Herod, who thought he had me fast, and so hath disappointed all the expectation of the people of the Jews, who doubted not to see Peter cut off the next day.

Peter came to his friends, and brought the knowledge of it to them. Here is a particular account of this, and it is very interesting.

He considered the thing, considered how imminent his danger was, how great his deliverance and now what was he to do? What improvement must he make of this deliverance? What must he do next? God's providence leaves room for the use of our prudence, and, though He has undertaken to perform and perfect what He has begun, yet He expects we should consider the thing.

Peter went directly to a friend's house, which, it is likely, lay near to the place where he was, it was the house of Mary, a sister of Barnabas, and mother of John Mark, whose house, it should seem, was frequently made use of for the private meeting of the disciples, either because it lay obscure, or because she was more forward than others were to open her doors to them, and, no doubt, it was, like the house of Obededom, blessed for the Ark's sake.

There he found many that were gathered together praying, at the dead time of the night, praying for Peter, who was the next day to come upon his trial, that God would find out some way or other for his deliverance. They continued in prayer, in token of their importunity, they did not think it enough once to have presented his case to God, but they did it again and again. Thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint. As long as we are kept waiting for a mercy we must continue praying for it.

It should seem that now when the affair came near to a crisis, they were more fervent in prayer than before, and it was a good sign that God intended to deliver Peter when he thus stirred up a spirit of prayer for his deliverance.

They gathered together for prayer on this occasion, though this would made them obnoxious to the government if they were discovered, yet they knew what an encouragement Christ gave to joint-prayer, Matt. 18:19, 20. They were many that were got together for this work, as many perhaps as the room would hold, and first one prayed, and then another, of those who gave themselves to the word and prayer, the rest joining with them.

This was in the night, when others were asleep, which was an instance both of their prudence and of their zeal. It is good for Christians to have private

meetings for prayer, especially in times of distress, and not to let fall nor forsake such assemblies.

Peter came to them when they were thus employed, which was an immediate present answer to their prayer. It was as if God should say, *Isa 65:24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear*.

Peter knocked at the door of the gate, trying to wake them out of their sleep, not knowing that he disturbed them in their prayers. Yet, if his friends were permitted to speak with him in private in the prison, it is possible he might know of this appointment, and it was this which he recollected and considered when he determined to go to that house, where he knew he should find many of his friends together.

A damsel came to hearken, not to open the door till she knew who was there, a friend or a foe, and what their business was, maybe fearing informers. Whether this damsel was one of the family or one of the church, whether a servant or a daughter, is not clear, it should seem, by her being named, that she was of note among the Christians.

She knew Peter's voice, having often heard him pray, and preach, and discourse, with a great deal of pleasure. But, instead of letting him in immediately out of the cold, she opened not the gate for gladness. Sometimes, in a transport of affection to our friends, we do that which is unkind. In an ecstasy of joy she forgets herself, and opened not the gate.

She ran in, and probably went up to an upper room where they were together, and told them that Peter was certainly at the gate, though she had not courage enough to open the gate, for fear she should be deceived, and it should be the enemy. But, when she spoke of Peter's being there, they said, "Thou art mad, it is impossible it should be he, for he is in prison."

Sometimes that which we most earnestly wish for we are most backward to believe as the disciples were. *Luk 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. Luk 24:40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. Luk 24:41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?*

However, she insisted that it was he. Then said they, It is his angel. First, "It is a messenger from him, that makes use of his name;" so some take it, angelos often signifies no more than a messenger. It is used of John's messengers (Luke 7:24, 27), of Christ's, Luke 9:52. When the damsel was confident it was Peter, because she knew his voice, they thought it was because he that stood at the door had called himself Peter, and therefore offer this solution of the difficulty, "It is one that comes with an errand from him, and thou didst mistake as if it had been he himself." Dr. Hammond thinks this the easiest way of understanding it. "It is his guardian angel, or some other angel that has assumed his shape and voice, and stands at the gate in his resemblance."

Some think that they supposed his angel to appear as a omen of his death approaching, and this agrees with a notion which the vulgar have, that

sometimes before persons have died their ward has been seen, that is, some spirit exactly in their likeness for countenance and dress, when they themselves have been at the same time in some other place, they call it their ward, that is, their angel, who is their guard. If so, they concluded this was an ill omen, that their prayers were denied, and that the language of the apparition was, “Let it suffice you, Peter must die, say no more of that matter.” And, if we understand it so, it only proves that they had then such an opinion of a man’s ward being seen a little before his death, but does not prove that there is such a thing.

Others think they took this to be an angel from heaven, sent to bring them an answer to their prayers. But why should they imagine that angel to assume the voice and shape of Peter, when we find not anything like it in the appearance of angels? Perhaps they spoke the language of the Jews, who had a fond belief that every good man has a particular guardian angel, that has charge of him, and sometimes impersonates him. The heathen called it a good genius, that attended a man, but, since no other scripture speaks of such a thing, this alone is too weak to bear the weight of such a doctrine.

We are sure that the angels are ministering spirits. *Heb 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

Eventually they let him in. He continued knocking though they delayed to open to him, and at last they admitted him. The iron gate of the prison opened of itself, without so much as once knocking at it, but the door of his friend’s house that was to welcome him does not open of its own accord, but must be knocked at, long knocked at, lest Peter should be puffed up by the honours which the angel did him, he meets with this mortification, by a seeming slight which his friends put upon him. But, when they saw him, they were astonished, were filled with wonder and joy in him, as much as they were but just now with sorrow and fear concerning him. It was both surprising and pleasing to them in the highest degree.

Peter gave them an account of his deliverance. When he joined the company that were gathered together with so much zeal to pray for him, they gathered about him with no less zeal to congratulate him on his deliverance, while he declared unto them how the Lord Jesus had by an angel brought him out of prison, and it is very likely, having found them praying for his deliverance, he did not part with them till he and they had together solemnly given thanks to God for his freedom or, if he could not stay to do it, it is probable they stayed together to do it, for what is won by prayer must be worn with praise, and God must always have the glory of that which we have the comfort of.

Peter sent the account to others of his friends*, go,* show these things to James, and to the brethren with him, who perhaps were met together in another place at the same time, upon the same errand to the throne of grace, which is one way of keeping up the communion of saints and wrestling with God in prayer, acting in concert, though at a distance, like Esther and Mordecai.

He would have James and his company to know of his deliverance, not only that they might be eased of their pain and delivered from their fears concerning Peter, but that they might return thanks to God with him and for him. Though Herod had slain one James with the sword, yet here was another James, and that

in Jerusalem too, that stood up in his room to preside among the brethren there, for, when God has work to do, he will never want for instruments to do it with.

Peter had nothing more to do for the present than to move for his own safety, which he did accordingly: He departed, and went into another place. He knew the town very well, and knew where to find a place that would be a shelter to him.

Having seen the triumph of Peter's friends in his deliverance, let us next observe the confusion of his enemies thereupon, which was so much the greater because people's expectation was so much raised of the putting of him to death.

The guards were in the utmost consternation upon it, for they knew how highly penal it was to them to let a prisoner escape that they had charge of. As soon as it was day, and they found the prisoner gone, there was no small stir or strife, as some read it, among the soldiers, what had become of Peter, he is gone, and nobody knows how or which way. They thought themselves as sure as could be of him only last night, yet now the bird is flown, and they can hear no tale nor tidings of him.

Herod sought for him, and found him not. Who can find whom God hath hidden? Baruch and Jeremiah are safe, though searched for, because the Lord has hidden them, Jer. 36:26. In times of public danger, all believers have God for their hiding-place, which is such a secret, that there the ignorant world cannot find them, such a strength, that the impotent world cannot reach them.

Herod examined the keepers, and finding that they could give no satisfactory account how Peter got away, he commanded that they should be put to death, according to the Roman law.

Some think that though they were commanded to be put to death, to please the Jews, who were sadly disappointed by Peter's escape, they were not executed as Herod's death, immediately after, prevented it.

Herod himself retired upon it. He went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode. He was vexed to the heart, as a lion disappointed of his prey, and the more because he had so much raised the expectation of the people of the Jews concerning Peter, had told them how he would very shortly gratify them with the sight of Peter's head in a charger, which would please them as much as John Baptist's did Herodias, it made him ashamed to be robbed of this boasting, and to see himself, notwithstanding his confidence, unable to make his words good. This is such a mortification to his proud spirit that he cannot bear to stay in Judea, but away he goes to Caesarea.

Josephus mentions this coming of Herod to Caesarea, at the end of the third year of his reign over all Judea (Antiq. 19. 343), and says, he came thither to solemnize the plays that were kept there, by a vast concourse of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom, for the health of Caesar, and in honour of him.

The Death of Herod

Act 12:20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. Act 12:21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. Act 12:22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. Act 12:23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. Act 12:24 But the word of God grew and multiplied. Act 12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

In these verses we have,

The death of Herod. God reckoned with him, not only for his putting James to death, but for his plan to put Peter to death, for sinners will be called to an account, not only for the wickedness of their deeds, but for the wickedness of their endeavours, for the mischief they have done and the mischief they would have done. It was but a little while that Herod lived after this. Some sinners God makes quick work with.

It was pride that did it, it is this that commonly goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Nebuchadnezzar had been a very bloody man, and a great persecutor, but the word that was in the king’s mouth when the judgments of God fell upon him was a proud word. *Dan 4:30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? Dan 4:31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee*.

The men of Tyre and Sidon had, it seems, offended Herod. Those cities were now under the Roman yoke, and they had been guilty of some misdemeanours which Herod highly resented, and was resolved they should feel his resentment. Some very small matter would serve such a proud imperious man as Herod was for a provocation, where he was disposed to pick a quarrel. He was highly displeased with this people, and they must be made to know that his wrath was as the roaring of a lion, as messengers of death.

The offenders sucked up to Herod, yet it was in vain to contend with such a potent adversary, who, right or wrong, would be too hard for them, they submitted and were willing upon any terms to make peace with him. The reason why they were desirous to have the matter resolved, was because their country was nourished by the king’s country. Tyre and Sidon were trading cities, and had little land belonging to them, but were always supplied with corn from the land of Canaan, Judah and Israel traded in their market, with wheat, and honey, and oil, Ezek. 27:17. Now if Herod should make a law to prohibit the exportation of corn to Tyre and Sidon (which they knew a man so revengeful as he might soon do, not caring how many were famished by it), their country would be undone, so that it was in their interest to keep in with him. And is it not our wisdom to make our peace with God, and humble ourselves before Him, who have a much more constant and necessary dependence upon Him than one country can have upon another, for in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

The method they took to prevent trouble was that they made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, probably with bribes and presents, that is usually the way for men to make courtiers their friends. And it is the hard fate of princes that they must have not only their affairs, but their affections too, governed by such mercenary tools, yet such men as Herod, that will not be governed by reason, had better be so governed than by pride and passion. Blastus had Herod's ear, and had the art of mollifying his resentments, and a time is fixed for the ambassadors of Tyre and Sidon to come and make a public submission, to beg his majesty's pardon, throw themselves upon his clemency, and promise never again to offend in the like manner, and that which will feed his pride shall serve to cool his passion.

Herod appeared in all the pomp and grandeur he had. He was arrayed in his royal apparel, and sat upon his throne. Josephus gives an account of this splendid appearance which Herod made upon this occasion - Antiq. 19. 344. He says that Herod at this time wore a robe of cloth of silver, so richly woven, and framed with such art, that when the sun shone it reflected the light with such a lustre as dazzled the eyes of the spectators, and struck an awe upon them. Foolish people value men by their outward appearance, and no better are those who value themselves by the esteem of such, who court it, and recommend themselves to it as Herod did, who thought to make up the want of a royal heart with his royal apparel, and sat upon his throne, as if that gave him a privilege to trample upon all about him as his footstool.

He made a speech to the men of Tyre and Sidon, a fine oration, in which, probably, after he had aggravated their fault, and commended their submission, he concluded with an assurance that he would pass by their offence and receive them into his favour again, proud enough that he had it in his power whom he would to keep alive, as well as whom he would slay, and probably he kept them in suspense as to what their doom should be, till he made this oration to them, that the act of grace might come to them with the more pleasing surprise.

The people applauded him, the people that had a dependence upon him, and had benefit by his favour, they gave a shout, and this was what they shouted, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. God is great and good, and they thought such was Herod's greatness in his apparel and throne, and such his goodness in forgiving them, that he was worthy to be called no less than a god, and perhaps his speech was delivered with such an air of majesty, and a mixture of clemency with it, as affected the listeners thus. Or, it may be, it was not from any real impression made upon their minds, or any high or good thoughts they had indeed conceived of him, but, how meanly they thought of him, they were resolved to curry favour with him, and strengthen the new-made peace between him and them. Thus great men are made an easy prey to flatterers if they lend an ear to them, and encourage them. Grotius here observes that, though magistrates are called gods (Ps. 82:1), yet kings or monarchs, that is, single persons, are not, lest countenance should thereby be given to the Gentiles, who gave divine honours to their kings alive and dead, as here, but they are a college of senators, or a bench of judges, that are called gods. Those that live by sense vilify God, as if He were altogether such a one as themselves, and deify men, as if they were gods, having their persons in admiration, because of advantage. This is not only a great affront to God, giving that glory to others which is due to Him alone, but a great injury to those who are thus flattered, as it makes them forget themselves, and so puffs them up with pride that they are in the utmost danger possible of falling into the condemnation of the devil.

These undue praises he took to himself, pleased himself with them, and prided himself in them, and this was his sin. We do not find that he had given any private orders to his confidants to begin such a shout, or to put those words into the mouths of the people, nor that he returned them thanks for the compliment and undertook to answer their opinion of him. But his fault was that he said nothing, did not rebuke their flattery, nor disown the title they had given him, nor give God the glory, but he took it to himself, was very willing it should terminate in himself, and that he should be thought a god and have divine honours paid him. If the people will be deceived, let them. And it was worse in him who was a Jew, and professed to believe in one God only, than it was in the heathen emperors, who had gods a plenty and lords a many.

Herod was punished immediately, the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory and he was eaten of worms above ground, and gave up the ghost. Now he was reckoned with for vexing the church of Christ, killing James, imprisoning Peter, and all the other mischief he had done.

It was no less than an angel that was the agent, the angel of the Lord, that angel that was ordered and commissioned to do it. For those ministering spirits are the ministers either of Divine justice or of Divine mercy, as God is pleased to employ them. The angel smote him with a sore disease just at that instant when he was strutting at the applauses of the people, and adoring his own shadow. The king of Tyre said in his pride, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, and set his heart as the heart of God; but he shall be a man, and no God, a weak mortal man, in the hand of him that slayeth thee (Ezek. 28:2-9), so is Herod here. Potent princes must know, not only that God is omnipotent, but that angels also are greater in power and might than they. The angel smote him, because he gave not the glory to God, angels are jealous for God’s honour, and as soon as ever they have commission are ready to smite those that usurp His prerogatives, and rob God of His honour.

It was no more than a worm that was the instrument of Herod’s destruction. He was eaten of worms, he became worm-eaten, so it must be read, rotten he was, and he became like a piece of rotten wood. The body in the grave is destroyed by worms, but Herod’s body putrefied while he was yet alive, and bred the worms which began to feed upon it, so that great persecutor, died.

Both in sacred and profane literature it is recorded that, during the last illness of various eminent persons, the fatal issue was accelerated, and the circumstances of death made extremely repulsive, by parasites infesting the body to such an extent as to give the impression to the beholders, that the unfortunate patient was being literally devoured up with worms. A familiar instance is the death of Herod Agrippa as narrated here in the Acts of the Apostles, and the closing scenes in the lives of Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod the Great were even more distressing from the same cause. As all three kings were guilty of blasphemous impiety, it has been assumed by some commentators, that “he was eaten of worms” is simply a picturesque phrase, without any foundation of actual fact beneath it, which has been added to the narrative to intensify the description of the horror and pain of the death, considered to have fallen upon the offenders as the just punishment for their particular sin. There is nothing intrinsically improbable, however, in a single detail of these narratives, on the contrary, the clinical observations, as far as

they go, are so accurate as to enable us practically to identify the particular disease and its complications, from which each of these royal patients suffered, and it is quite certain that parasites of various kinds, either directly or indirectly, have been the cause of many deaths. The only doubt and difficulty lie in determining precisely the creature that is meant by “worm,” a term which is as indefinite in Hebrew and Greek as it is in English

What vile bodies those are which we carry about with us, they carry about with them the seeds of their own dissolution, by which they will soon be destroyed whenever God does but speak the word. Surprising discoveries have of late been made by microscopes of the multitude of worms that there are in human bodies, and how much they contribute to the diseases of them, which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our bodies, or of any of their accomplishments, and why we should not pamper our bodies, for this is but feeding the worms. See what weak and contemptible creatures God can make the instruments of his justice, when he pleases. Pharaoh is plagued with lice and flies, Ephraim consumed as with a moth, and Herod eaten with worms.

See how God delights not only to bring down proud men, but to bring them down in such a way as is most mortifying, and pours most contempt upon them. Herod is not only destroyed, but destroyed by worms, that the pride of his glory may be effectually stained.

This story of the death of Herod is particularly related by Josephus, a Jew, Antiq. 19. 343-350: “That Herod came down to Caesarea, to celebrate a festival in honour of Caesar, that the second day of the festival he went in the morning to the theatre, clothed with that splendid robe mentioned before, that his flatterers saluted him as a god, begged that he would be kind to them, that before they had revered him as a man, but now they would confess to be in him something more excellent than a mortal nature. He did not refuse or correct this impious flattery, but, presently after, looking up, he saw an owl perched over his head, and was at the same instant seized with a most violent pain in his bowels, and gripes in his belly, which were exquisite from the very first, that he turned his eyes upon his friends, and said to this purpose, ‘Now I, whom you called a god, and therefore immortal, must be proved a man, and mortal.’ That his torture continued without intermission, or the least abatement, and then he died in the fifty-fourth year of his age, when he had been king seven years.”

The progress of the gospel after this grew and multiplied, as seed sown, which comes up with a great increase, wherever the gospel was preached, multitudes embraced it, and were added to the church by it. After the death of James, the word of God grew, for the church, the more it was afflicted, the more it multiplied, like Israel in Egypt. The courage and comfort of the martyrs, and God’s owning them, did more to invite people to Christianity, than their sufferings did to deter them from it.

After the death of Herod the word of God gained ground. When such a persecutor was taken off by a dreadful judgment, many were convinced that the cause of Christianity was doubtless the cause of Christ, and therefore embraced it.

Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch as soon as they had despatched the business they were sent upon or when they had fulfilled their ministry, had paid in their money to the proper persons, and taken care about the due distribution of it to those for whom it was collected, they returned from Jerusalem. Though they had a great many friends there, yet at present their work lay at Antioch, and where our business is there we should be, and no longer from it than is requisite. When a minister is called abroad upon any service, when he has fulfilled that ministry, he ought to remember that he has work to do at home, which wants him there and calls him.

Barnabas and Saul, when they went to Antioch, took with them John, whose surname was Mark, at whose mother's house they had that meeting for prayer for Peter. She was related to Barnabas. It is probable that Barnabas lodged there, and perhaps Paul with him, while they were at Jerusalem, and it was that that occasioned the meeting there at that time (for wherever Paul was he would have some good work going), and their intimacy in that family while they were at Jerusalem occasioned their taking a son of that family with them when they returned, to be trained up under them, and employed by them, in the service of the gospel. Educating young men for the ministry, and entering them into it, is a very good work for elder ministers to take care of, and of good service to the rising generation.

Acts Chapter13

Barnabas and Saul Sent Off

Act 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Act 13:3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

We have here a Divine warrant and commission to Barnabas and Saul to go and preach the gospel among the Gentiles, and their ordination to that service by the imposition of hands, with fasting and prayer.

Barnabas and Saul are called and sent by the Holy Spirit.

The people at the church in Antioch.

Now in the church that was at Antioch were Barnabas, Paul, and John Mark, having returned from delivering a gift of support to the church in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were among the teachers and prophets there, as were Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen.

Simeon who was called Niger: Since Niger means black, he was presumably a black African among the congregation at Antioch.

Lucius of Cyrene very probably was one of the synagogues of the Cyrenians, and seems to be one of the men of Cyrene, that went abroad upon the persecution raised at the death of Stephen, Act 6:9, he is said to be bishop of Cyrene and some take him to be the same Lucius mentioned later. *Rom 16:21 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.*

Manaen who is mentioned here grew up with Herod the tetrarch or Herod the Great. This was the same Herod who beheaded John the Baptist and presided over one of Jesus' trials (Luke 23:7-12).

Herod and Manaen grew up together, but went very different ways. One killed John the Baptist and presided over one of the trials of Jesus before His crucifixion. The other became a Christian, and a leader in the dynamic congregation at Antioch.

They ministered to the Lord, this was part of what happened at the congregation in Antioch. Barnabas and others certainly ministered to the congregation, and the congregation also ministered one to another. Yet they also ministered to the Lord. The word translated ministered is that usually employed in the Septuagint for the service of priests and Levites in the temple.

Ministering to the Lord means doing what pleases Him and honours Him.

They also fasted as part of their service to the Lord. Presumably, they fasted because they sensed a need to seek God in a special way.

Judging from the calling described in the text, it is possible that they sought God about the need to spread the gospel to all the earth.

If we assume they fasted and prayed about the need of the world for Jesus, we can see how God answered their prayer, by using them. This is often how God moves, by sending the people who have it on their hearts to pray.

Many want to be "back seat drivers" in God's work. They hope to say, "I'll have the burden and you do the work." But God's typical way of working is to send the people who have the burden to do the work.

As they ministered unto the Lord, God spoke to them. This was a word of calling that would guide Barnabas and Paul into a specific work. Possibly, the call came through the ministry of prophets in the church at Antioch, though it could have come simply through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

Before Barnabas and Paul could do anything significant for God, they first had to be separated to Him. If you will separate to God, it means you must separate from some other things.

You can't really say "yes" to God's call on your life until you can say "no" to things that will keep you from that call.

Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work, it is significant that the two men called to missionary service were, as far as we know, the two most gifted and able men in the congregation.

God had a specific work He had appointed to Barnabas and Saul to do. Paul would later write in Ephesians 2:10: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.* Here, God called Barnabas and Saul to those kinds of good works.

The calling God had for the life of Paul had already been stated in Acts 9:15-16: *He is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.* This was not a touchy-feely "feel good" call, it was a serious call to a serious ministry.

They were sent with fasting and prayer. This whole work required a substantial dependence on God, and fasting and prayer demonstrated that dependence.

Notice that the church in Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul out. They were supported and sent by a specific congregation. As far as we know, this had never happened before in the history of the church. Many went out as "accidental missionaries" (as in Acts 8:4 and 11:19) but there was never a concerted and organized effort to win people to Jesus like this.

They are sent without a committee report, without a demographic analysis, without a marketing survey, without what is sometimes called "spiritual mapping." Barnabas and Paul went out without any of these things, only with the call and power of the Holy Spirit.

As you know I like maps, so let's follow our friends on their incredible journey, starting off from Antioch.

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus

Act 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. Act 13:5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. Act 13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Act 13:7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of

God. Act 13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Act 13:9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, Act 13:10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Act 13:11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Act 13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Ministry in the Cities of Seleucia, Salamis and Paphos.

First stop: Seleucia.

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

We aren't told of any specific work that took place in Seleucia, a city near Antioch. Paul and Barnabas may have gone there merely because it was the port city near Antioch, but it is hard to imagine them not doing *any* ministry there.

Since Seleucia wasn't far from Antioch, where there was a thriving church, it isn't difficult to assume there was already a group of Christians there in that city.

On the Island of Cyprus: The City of Salamis, on the East Coast.

When they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

We are not told *w*hy they went to Cyprus first, but we do know Barnabas grew up on that island (Acts 4:36).

They preached the word of God in the synagogues. This custom of the open synagogue gave Barnabas and Saul many opportunities to preach. This tradition invited any learned man to speak to the people of the synagogue at the Sabbath meeting.

Meeting the Roman proconsul in Paphos.

Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

Paphos on the west coast of Cyprus was known for its immorality. Here Barnabas and Saul faced a combination of immorality and spiritual darkness that was common across the pagan world of the Roman Empire.

Paphos was infamous for its worship of Venus, the goddess of [sexual] love" (Barclay). "Athanasius styled its religion 'the deification of lust.' Neither men nor women could resort to the shrine of Venus without being defiled in mind and depraved in character." (Spurgeon)

The proconsul, Sergius Paulus was an important man. A Roman proconsul was responsible for an entire province and answered to the Roman Senate.

"All Roman provinces were divided into two classes, those that required troops and those that did not. The latter were administered by the Senate and ruled by proconsuls, the former were under the administration of the emperor." (Williams)

"Sir William Ramsay reports that inscriptions bearing Sergius Paulus' name have been found on Cyprus confirming that he was a Christian and that his entire family became Christians." (Hughes)

While ministering in Paphos (presumably after the same fashion, going into the synagogues and presenting Jesus), an unexpected door opened, and the proconsul wanted to hear the word of God.

The Resistance of Elymas the Sorcerer.

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated): Paul was opposed by a man named Elymas. His real name was Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6) which means "son of Jesus," and Luke couldn't bear to call him that. This Elymas (who was some kind of advisor to the proconsul) attempted to frustrate the missionary efforts of Barnabas and Saul.

“Wherever there is likely to be great success, the open door and the opposing adversaries will both be found. If there are no adversaries, you may fear that there will be no success. A boy cannot get his kite up without wind, nor without a wind which drives against his kite.” (Spurgeon)

Paul, using spiritual discernment and operating in the gift of faith, rebuked and pronounced the judgment of God upon Elymas (you shall be blind).

As Elymas was struck with blindness, we can’t help but think Paul would remember his own experience with God. Paul was struck blind at his experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:9). Certainly, those who resist God are blind spiritually, so God just gave Elymas a physical blindness that matched his spiritual blindness. Sadly, we never hear of Elymas repenting, as Paul did.

Then the proconsul believed. Paul was harsh in his confrontation against Elymas because the eternal destiny of the proconsul was at stake.

If someone wants to commit spiritual suicide, that’s one thing. But it is never right to bring others down also. If you want to give up on the things of God and grow bitter in your heart against Him, that’s your choice. But it is a heavy sin to draw anyone else away with you, either with your words or your example.

“The severest words of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, are reserved for those who stand between men and truth, for those who stand between men and God…It must be the heart that loves Sergius Paulus that speaks in anger to Elymas the sorcerer.” (Morgan)

When he saw what had been done, among other things, we can say that the proconsul saw something in Paul and something in Elymas.

He saw the courage of Paul. Here was a man of conviction, bold in his belief, and willing to make a stand for what he believed.

He saw the just result of Elymas’ sin, physical blindness corresponding to his spiritual blindness. When we see the trouble sin brings people into, it helps us pursue God more earnestly.

As amazing as the miracle of Elymas’ sudden blindness was, the good news the proconsul heard from Paul was even more amazing. His astonishment is said to be at the teaching of the Lord (presumably, the doctrines of God’s gracious gift to man in Jesus, through the cross) not the miraculous work before his eyes.

Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia

Act 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. Act 13:14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. Act 13:15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Act 13:16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. Act 13:17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as

strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. Act 13:18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. Act 13:19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. Act 13:20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. Act 13:21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. Act 13:22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. Act 13:23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: Act 13:24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. Act 13:25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose. Act 13:26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. Act 13:27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. Act 13:28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. Act 13:29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. Act 13:30 But God raised him from the dead: Act 13:31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. Act 13:32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, Act 13:33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Act 13:34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Act 13:35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Act 13:36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: Act 13:37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Act 13:38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: Act 13:39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Act 13:40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Act 13:41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. Act 13:42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Act 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. Act 13:44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. Act 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Act 13:46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. Act 13:47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the

ends of the earth. Act 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Act 13:49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. Act 13:50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. Act 13:51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. Act 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

From Paphos to Perga.

Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem**.**

The missionary group is now described as "Paul and his party." Previously, as recently as Acts 13:7, the group was described as Barnabas and Saul. From this point on, Paul's leadership and prominence will be evident.

They left the island of Cyprus, coming to Perga on the mainland of what is today Turkey.

We don't know exactly why John Mark went home to Jerusalem. Perhaps he was homesick. Perhaps he was afraid of the tough and dangerous travel through the mountains ahead of them.

As will become clear later from Acts 15:36-41, Paul didn't appreciate the departure of John Mark here, and to some degree he seems to have lost confidence in him as a missionary companion, a member of the team. This reminds us that as great and Godly as these men were, and as great as the work was that they did, they still had problems.

The Sermon at Pisidian Antioch

The customary invitation in the synagogue gives Paul an opportunity to preach Jesus.

But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

Perga was a costal, harbour city, where the ship from Paphos came to the mainland. Antioch in Pisidia was about 135 miles (220 kilometres) inland, to the north. This general region was known as Galatia, and later Paul wrote a letter to these churches that is included in our New Testament library.

First-century synagogue services followed a general order. Opening prayers were offered, and then there was a reading from the Law (the first five books of the Old Testament), then, a reading from the Prophets. Then, if there was an

educated person present, they were invited to speak on subjects related to the readings.

The rulers of the synagogue gave Paul the customary invitation, and he was more than happy to use the opportunity.

Paul begins his sermon in the synagogue, explaining how God's work in history leads up to Jesus.

Men of Israel and you who fear God. Paul addressed both groups at the synagogue on a typical Sabbath, both Jews and "near Jews," those Gentiles who admired the Jewish religion but did not make a full commitment to Judaism.

According to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Saviour, Jesus. In this survey of Israel's history, Paul noted important events, the choosing of the patriarchs, the deliverance from Egypt, the time in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, the time of the Judges, the creation of a monarchy, but it all led up to Jesus.

This survey of Israel's history demonstrates that God has a plan for history, and we need to sense a connection to that plan. Jesus is the goal of history, and as we are in Jesus, we are in the flow of God's great plan of redemption.

Using the examples of John the Baptist and the Jewish rulers, Paul shows how people both received and rejected Jesus.

"After John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.' Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb."

John the Baptist responded to Jesus the right way. He prepared the hearts of others for Jesus, and he saw Jesus as who He really was. John knew Jesus was the One greater than all others. He knew Jesus was more than a teacher, He was the Lord God we must all answer to.

The sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose. This statement shows that John knew Jesus was high above him. In that day, it was not uncommon for a great teacher to have disciples follow him, and it was expected that the disciples would serve the teacher in various ways. This arrangement came to be abused, so the leading rabbis established certain things that were too demeaning for a teacher to expect of his disciples. It was decided that for a teacher to expect his disciple to undo the strap of his sandal was too much, it was too demeaning. Here, John insisted he wasn't even worthy to do this for Jesus.

Those who didn't know the Scriptures rejected Jesus, and delivered Him to Pilate to be executed. This was true even though they lived in Jerusalem and were rulers among the Jews. Therefore Jesus was executed and laid in a tomb.

They took Him down from the tree. In calling the cross a tree, Paul drew on the idea that God curses a person who is hanged from a tree.

Deu 21:22 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: Deu 21:23 His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. Paul wanted to communicate the idea that Jesus was cursed so that we could be blessed.

Gal 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: Gal 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Paul preaches the resurrected Jesus.

"But God raised Him from the dead. He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. And we declare to you glad tidings; that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus, I will give you the sure mercies of David.' Therefore He also says in another Psalm, You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption, but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

But God, these are wonderful words. Man did his best to fight against God, even to kill Him, but God was greater than man's sin and rebellion, and Jesus rose from the grave, winning over sin and death.

But God raised Him from the dead. Here, the fact was simply stated. Yet, evidence from eyewitnesses was also offered (He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him).

We should not miss an emphasis on events in Paul's preaching here, it is so evident that it can be missed. He focused on things that actually happened, not on philosophy or even theology. "Christianity is not just a philosophy or a set of ethics, though it involves these things. Essentially Christianity is a proclamation of facts that concern what God has done." (Boice)

God has fulfilled this for us their children. Then Paul applied the truth of Jesus' resurrection. The resurrection means that Jesus truly is the unique Son of God (Psalm 2:7), and it proves that He was utterly holy even in His work on the cross (Psalm 16:10).

With a promise and a warning, Paul applies the truth of who Jesus is and what He did for us.

“Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you. Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish!

The promise is that, because of who Jesus is and what He did for us, **f**orgiveness is offered to us freely in Jesus. We may be justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

We can never justify ourselves before God. To think so assumes God grades on a curve, a measure that bends according to human weakness. To think so also gives us the glory for our own salvation instead of simply saying, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves*;* it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*.*” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Some refuse to embrace the salvation of Jesus in the secret place of their heart, because they want a salvation of their own making. They want to be saved the old-fashioned way, they want to earn it.

Only a few months after this, Paul wrote a letter to these churches in Galatia, dealing with these same themes of being justified by God’s grace, and not by keeping the law.

Everyone who believes is justified, Jesus does not only forgive us, but we are also justified by Him. Forgiveness takes care of the debt of sin, but justification puts a positive credit on our account before God.

Beware, therefore the warning is that if we do not embrace the person and work of Jesus with our whole lives, we are despisers who will perish. In this warning, Paul quoted a passage from Habakkuk regarding the judgment that came upon Jerusalem. If God judged them, He will also judge those who refuse and reject His offer of forgiveness through the work of Jesus.

Some commentators complain that Paul here preached too much like Peter did on Pentecost. It is a strange complaint. This shows us that Peter and Paul preached the same gospel, and the same gospel was preached some fifteen years after Pentecost as was preached on that first day.

Others note similarities between Paul’s sermon here and the sermon of Stephen in Acts Chapter 7. That was a sermon that Paul heard when he still hated the name of Jesus. Perhaps the sermon of the first martyr of the church still rang in the ears of the man who presided over his execution.

The Response to the Sermon at Pisidian Antioch

(42-43) Many people, both Jews and Gentiles, express interest in Paul's message.

So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Both Jews and Gentiles at the synagogue responded positively, yet Luke noted an even greater response from the Gentiles present.

We could assume that many of these believed for two reasons.

· First, because many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas. There was a continuing interest in their message.

· Second, because Paul and Barnabas persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. This means they had already started to trust in the grace of God.

Continuing in grace is as important as beginning in grace, we must never leave it as the basic principle of our relationship with God. Far too many only think of grace as the introduction to the Christian life, but God wants grace to remain as the foundation for our life with Him.

(44-45) On the next Sabbath, envy creates opposition.

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

"In our day, people are overwhelmed with information. We have radio, television, newspapers, magazines. People did not have any of this in that day. So when somebody came through from another city, the person was a source of precious information and people naturally thronged about him. The missionaries were proclaiming something new." (Boice)

There was not merely the power of novelty, there was more notably the power of the word of God. This was the primary power that attracted people, and Luke emphasized it in his account.

· *The whole city came together to hear the word of God* (Acts 13:44).

· Paul and Barnabas spoke *the word of God* to them first (Acts 13:46).

· The Gentiles responded to *the word of the Lord* (Acts 13:48).

· The *word of the Lord* spread through the region (Acts 13:49).

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy. The dramatic response made the leaders of the synagogue envious. This is inevitable for those who are more concerned about being popular than serving God. When someone else is more popular, they become filled with envy. We can't all be popular to the same degree, but we can all serve and please God to the same degree in Jesus Christ.

Paul's preaching was opposed as if he were conducting a debate, with his opponents contradicting him and blaspheming God.

The blasphemy mentioned probably has to do with abusive and degrading language directed towards Jesus, whom Paul preached.

They opposed the things spoken by Paul. It seems strange that these religious people who waited so long for their Messiah would now reject Him when Jesus was presented to them. One great reason was they wanted to keep the division between Jew and Gentile, and if Jesus was to be the Messiah of all men, they wanted no part of Him.

Some people end up rejecting Jesus because of the way He changes our relationship with other people. Some would rather hold on to their bitterness and animosity towards others than turn to Jesus and be reconciled.

(46-48) Paul and Barnabas respond to the Jewish opposition.

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first, but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Paul and Barnabas had wonderful zeal for the things of God. They wouldn't let this challenge go unanswered, because they really believed the truth about Jesus. They rebuked those who rejected Jesus, letting the Jews know that it was a privilege that this message should come to them first, a privilege they were now rejecting.

The Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. They also responded with more evangelism to open hearts, now directing their efforts to the Gentiles, in obedience to God's command (Romans 1:16) and in fulfilment of prophecy (the quotation from Isaiah 49:6).

The Gentiles responded to Paul's invitation with enthusiastic belief, learning with joy that God does not hate Gentiles, but offered them salvation in Jesus.

Paul showed wisdom in not spending all his time trying to persuade hardened hearts. We know that even after he made Gentiles the focus of his evangelistic efforts, he still prayed earnestly for the salvation of Israel (Romans 10:1), but he spent his missionary time ministering to more open hearts.

(49-50) Blessing and opposition.

And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

It was being spread through the efforts of Paul and Barnabas, but especially through the lives of these people being brought to Jesus Christ. It's remarkable to think that this church was born in a little more than a week. On one Sabbath Paul and Barnabas preached in the synagogue and there was a wonderful response. The following Sabbath there was a mixed response, some very hostile and some very receptive. They took the receptive ones and started a church that has lasted for hundreds of years and through that church, the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.

Sometimes remarkable works of God happen quite quickly. We should be happy for such seasons of rapid progress in God's work.

But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region, Wherever there is revival, the second group to be revived is the Devil. Jewish opposition was strong enough to force Paul and Barnabas to leave the area.

(51-52) Paul and Barnabas react to their expulsion from the city of Pisidian Antioch.

They shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. In doing this, Paul and Barnabas treated the city as if it were a God-rejecting city.

If Jewish people had to go in or through a Gentile city, when leaving the city they shook the dust off their feet as a gesture saying, "We don't want to take anything from this Gentile city with us." In this sense, Paul said "I don't want to take anything with me from you Jesus-rejecting religionists."

This rejection did not make Paul and Barnabas think there was anything wrong with themselves. They knew the problem was with their opposition, not themselves. They carried on the work, going next to Iconium. All too often, rejection and opposition for the sake of the gospel makes us want to give up. But Paul and Barnabas responded with appropriate determination.

Being filled with joy and being filled with the Holy Spirit go together. Paul and Barnabas had joy that contradicted their circumstances. Paul is a great example of his own command to be constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

"The happiness of a genuine Christian lies far beyond the reach of earthly disturbances, and is not affected by the changes and chances to which mortal things are exposed. The martyrs were more happy in the flames than their persecutors could be on their beds of down." (Clarke)

Acts Chapter 14

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium

Act 14:1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. Act 14:2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Act 14:3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. Act 14:4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. Act 14:5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, Act 14:6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: Act 14:7 And there they preached the gospel.

The preaching of the gospel in Iconium, when the apostles were forced out of Antioch. As the blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church, so the banishment of the believers has helped to scatter that seed. They made the first offer of the gospel to the Jews in their synagogues, they went there not only as to a place of meeting, but as to a place of meeting with those, to whom, they chose to speak to first. Though the Jews at Antioch had used them barbarously, they did not fear or avoid preaching the gospel to the Jews at Iconium, who perhaps might receive it better.

They went both together into the synagogue, to testify their agreement and mutual affection, that people might say, “see how they love one another”, and might think the better of Christianity, and that they might strengthen one another’s hands and confirm one another’s testimony, and out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established. Deu19. They did not go to one one day and another the next, nor one go at the beginning and the other sometime after, but they went in both together.

They so spoke that a great multitude, some hundreds perhaps, if not thousands, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, that is the Gentiles, believed. The gospel was now preached to Jews and Gentiles together, and those of each denomination that believed came together into the church. In the close of the previous chapter it was preached to the Jews first, and some of them believed, and then to the Gentiles, and some of them believed, but here they are put together, being put upon the same level.

The Jews have not so lost their preference as to be thrown behind, only the Gentiles are brought to stand upon even terms with them, both are reconciled to God in one body (Eph. 2:16), and both together admitted into the church without distinction.

There seems to have been something remarkable in the manner of the apostles’ preaching here, which contributed to their success. They so spoke that a great multitude believed, so plainly, so convincingly, with such an evidence

and demonstration of the Spirit, and with such power, they spoke so warmly, so affectionately, and with such a genuine concern for the souls of men, that one might perceive they were not only convinced, but filled, with the things they spoke of, and that what they spoke came from the heart and therefore was likely to reach to the heart, they so spoke, so earnestly and so seriously, so boldly and courageously, that those who heard them could not but say that God was with them of a truth. Yet the success was not to be attributed to the manner of their preaching, but to the Spirit of God, who made use of that means.

The opposition that their preaching met with there, and the trouble that was created for them, lest they should be puffed up with the multitude of their converts, there was given to them resistance.

Unbelieving Jews were the first cause of their trouble here, as elsewhere (Acts 14:2) and they stirred up the Gentiles. The influence which the gospel had upon many of the Gentiles, and their embracing it, provoked some of the Jews to a holy jealousy and stirred them up to receive the gospel too (Rom. 11:14), also it provoked others of them to a wicked jealousy, and set them against the gospel. Thus as good instructions, so good examples, which to some are a savour of life, to others are a savour of death. See 2 Cor. 2:15, 16.

Disaffected Gentiles, irritated by the unbelieving Jews, were likely to be the instruments of their trouble. The Jews, by false suggestions, which they were continually buzzing in the ears of the Gentiles, made their minds evilly affected against the brethren. They not only took occasion in all companies, as it came in their way, but made it their business to go purposely to such as they had any acquaintance with, and said all that their wit or malice could invent to beget in them not only a mean but an ill opinion of Christianity, telling them how destructive it would certainly be to their pagan theology and worship, and, for their parts, they would rather be Gentiles than Christians. So they soured and embittered their spirits against both the converters and the converted. The old serpent did, by its poisonous tongue, infuse his venom against the seed of the woman into the minds of these Gentiles, and this was a root of bitterness in them, bearing gall and wormwood. It is no wonder if those who are ill affected towards good people wish ill to them, speak ill of them, and contrive ill against them, it is all owing to ill will.

Ekakosan, they vexed the minds of the Gentiles (so some of the critics take it), they were continually teasing them with their impertinent words.

Notwithstanding this opposition, and God’s owning them in it, Acts 14:3. The apostles work for Christ, faithfully and diligently, according to the trust committed to them. Because the minds of the Gentiles were evil affected against them, one would think that they should have withdrawn, and hastened out of the way, or, if they had preached, should have preached cautiously, for fear of giving further provocation to those who were already enough enraged. No, on the contrary, they abode there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord. The more they perceived the spite and rancour of the town against the new converts, the more they were driven to go on in their work, and the more needful they saw it to continue among them, to confirm them in the faith, and to comfort them. They spoke boldly, and were not afraid of giving offence to the unbelieving Jews.

What God said to the prophet, with reference to the unbelieving Jews in his day, was now made good to the apostles, *I have made thy face strong against their faces*, Ezek. 3:7-9. But observe what it was that animated them, they spoke boldly in the Lord, in His strength, and trusting in Him to bear them out, not depending upon anything in themselves. They were strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Christ was working with the apostles, according to His promise, *Lo, I am with you always*. When they went on in His name and strength, He did not fail to give testimony to the word of his grace.

The gospel is a word of grace, the assurance of God's good will to us and the means of His good work in us. It is the word of Christ's grace, for it is in Him alone that we find favour with God. Christ Himself has attested this word of grace, who is the Amen, the faithful witness, He has assured us that it is the word of God, and that we may venture our souls upon it. As it was said in general concerning the first preachers of the gospel that they had the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following (Mark 16:20), so it is said particularly concerning the apostles here that the Lord confirmed their testimony, in granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands, in the miracles they wrought in the kingdom of nature, as well as the wonders done by their word, in the greater miracles wrought on men's minds by the power of Divine Grace. The Lord was with them, while they were with Him, and abundance of good was done.

The multitude of the city was divided into two parties, and both were active and vigorous. Among the rulers and persons of rank, and among the common people, there were some that held with the unbelieving Jews, and others that held with the apostles.

It seems, this business of preaching the gospel was so universally taken notice of with such concern that every person, even of the multitude of the city, was either for it or against it, none stood on the fence.

We may here see the meaning of Christ's prediction that He came not to send peace upon earth, but rather division, Luke 12:51-53. Disagreeing here, the breach was wide as the sea. Yet the apostles must not be blamed for coming to Iconium, although before they came the city was united, and now it was divided, for it is better that part of the city go to heaven than all to hell. Let us not think it strange if the preaching of the gospel occasions division, nor be offended at it, it is better to be reproached and persecuted as dividers for swimming against the stream than yield ourselves to be carried down the stream that leads to destruction. Let us hold with the apostles, and not fear those that hold with the Jews.

Acts 14:4 is the first time Paul and Barnabas are called apostles in the Book of Acts. The only other time the title is used for them in Acts is at 14:14. Paul often used the title of himself in his letters.

The evil feeling against them broke out at length into violent outrages, Acts 14:5. *B*oth the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers. The Gentiles and Jews were at enmity with one another, and yet united against Christians, like Herod and Pilate, Sadducees and Pharisees, against Christ, and like Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, of old, against Israel Ps 83. If the church's enemies can unite for its

destruction, shall not its friends, laying aside all personal feuds, unite for its preservation?

Having now got the rulers on their side, they wanted to make their point, and their plan was to mistreat the apostles, to expose them to disgrace, and then to stone them, to put them to death, and thus they hoped to win their cause. They aimed to take away both their reputation and their life, and this was all they had to lose, all that men could take from them, for they had neither lands nor goods.

They got away, they became aware of the plot against them, or the beginning of the attempt upon them, and they made an honourable retreat (for it was not an inglorious flight) to Lystra and Derbe, and there they found safety. Their persecutors in Iconium were for the present satisfied that they were run out of their borders, and pursued them no further. They found work, and this was what they went for. When the door of opportunity was shut against them at Iconium, it was opened at Lystra and Derbe. To these cities they went, and there, and in the region that lieth round about, they preached the gospel.

William Ramsay demonstrated that Lystra and Derbe were indeed together in the Roman province of Lycaonia, but only between A.D. 37 and 72, the exact period these events in Acts took place. This kind of accuracy persuaded Ramsay that the Biblical account was true, especially in an age when they were all thought to be fables and made-up stories.

Paul and Barnabas at Lystra

Act 14:8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: Act 14:9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Act 14:10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. Act 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. Act 14:12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Act 14:13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Act 14:14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, Act 14:15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Act 14:16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Act 14:17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. Act 14:18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Stand upright on thy feet, is said in a number of versions, this clause is introduced with these words, "I say unto thee, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ", which is a form that Peter used, whereby the virtue of the miracle is ascribed to Christ, and not assumed by the apostle.

Act 3:6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

Act 14:10 So he shouted, "You! In the name of our Lord Jesus, stand up on your feet!" The man instantly jumped to his feet, stood for the first time in his life, and walked! TPT

This does seem logical.

The poor cripple, he was impotent in his feet, disabled, it was well known that he had been so from his mother's womb, and that he had never walked.

The expectation that was raised in him of a cure, he heard Paul preach and was affected by what he heard, he believed that the messengers, having their commission, had a Divine power going along with them, and were therefore able to cure him of his lameness.

Paul was aware of this, by the spirit of discerning that he had, and perhaps the aspect of his countenance did in part witness for him, Paul perceived that he had faith to be healed, desired it, hoped for it, which it does not appear that the lame man Peter healed had, for he expected no more than alms.

Paul spoke to him with a loud voice, either because he was at some distance, or to show that the true miracles, wrought by the power of Christ, were far unlike the lying wonders wrought by deceivers, that muttered, and whispered, Paul spoke to him with a loud voice, that the people about might take notice, and have their expectations raised of the effect. It does not appear that this cripple was a beggar, it is said that he sat, not that he sat begging. But we may imagine how sad it was to him to see other people walking about him, and himself disabled, and therefore how welcome Paul's word was to him, "Stand upright on thy feet."

Power went along with this word, he leapt and walked, leapt up from the place where he sat, and not only stood upright, but to show that he was perfectly cured, and that immediately, he walked to and fro before them all.

The people were amazed at this miracle, they had never seen nor heard the like. Paul and Barnabas were strangers, exiles, refugees, in their country and the working of this one miracle was enough to make them in the eyes of this people truly great and honourable.

We do have some god confusion in verse 12.

Act 14:12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

These are also rendered Zeus and Hermes in different translations.

The Romans regarded Jupiter as the equivalent of the Greek Zeus, and in Latin literature and Roman art, the myths and iconography of Zeus are adapted under the name Jupiter. In the Greek-influenced tradition, Jupiter was the brother of Neptune and Pluto, the Roman equivalents of Poseidon and Hades respectively.

The Greek god Hermes (the Roman Mercury) was the god of translators and interpreters. He was the most clever of the Olympian gods, and served as messenger for all the other gods.

The people of Lystra had a legend that once Zeus and Hermes visited their land disguised as mortals, and no one gave them any hospitality except for one older couple. In their anger at the people, Zeus and Hermes wiped out the whole population, except for the old couple. This may help explain why the Lystrians were so quick to honour Paul and Barnabas.

Hermes was known as the messenger of the gods, so it made sense to the Lystrians that Paul (the more talkative one) was Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Barnabas apparently had an air of authority about him, so they regarded him as Zeus.

Hermes is an Olympian deity in ancient Greek religion and mythology considered the herald of the gods. He is also widely considered the protector of human heralds, travellers, thieves, merchants, and orators. He is able to move quickly and freely between the worlds of the mortal and the divine aided by his winged sandals.

Here we have what I consider one of the pitfalls of many a missionary! The people's adoration of Paul and Barnabas progressed because they praised them in the Lycaonian language or in their own tongue. The crowd's use of Lycaonian perhaps explains why Paul and Barnabas did not grasp what was happening until the preparations for sacrifice and worship them were well advanced. We don't know what language the apostles were speaking to the people in.

But when Paul and Barnabas saw the priest of Jupiter/Zeus, with oxen and garlands, intending to sacrifice, they knew things had gone too far. This was far more than welcoming and honouring guests to the city.

The people take them for gods, they imagined that Paul and Barnabas had dropped down to them out of the clouds, and that they were some divine powers, no less than gods, though in the likeness of men. This notion of the thing agreed well enough with the pagan theology, and the fabulous account they had of the visits which their gods made to this lower world, and proud enough they were to think that they should have a visit made to them.

They carried this notion so far that they pretended to tell which of their gods they were, according to the ideas their poets had given them of the god, it is as easy to make him the prince of their gods as not.

The priest thereupon prepared to do sacrifice to them. The temple of Jupiter was, it seems, before the gate of their city, as its protector and guardian, and the priest of that idol and temple, hearing the people cry out thus, took the hint, and thought it was time for him to do his duty and the people are ready to join with him in it.

See how easily vain minds are carried away with a popular outcry. If the crowd give a shout, here is Jupiter, the priest of Jupiter takes the first hint, and offers his service immediately. When Christ, the Son of God, came down, and appeared

in the likeness of men, and did many, very many miracles, yet they were so far from doing sacrifice to Him that they made Him a sacrifice to their pride and malice. He was in the world, and the world knew Him not, He came to His own, and His own received Him not, but Paul and Barnabas, upon the working of one miracle, are immediately deified.

They brought oxen, to be sacrificed to them, and garlands, with which to crown the sacrifices.

Paul and Barnabas rightly protest against this undue respect paid to them, and with much ado prevent it.

Witnessing

Act 14:8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: Act 14:9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, Act 14:10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. Act 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

This healing is unusual because it also carries with it a mental process, knowledge and ability normally acquired in a period of time. Personal anecdote as a child finding its way around, walking is a skill requiring balance and special awareness and this is mastered at an early age, not without some mishaps and falls. Here in Acts we have a man who is congenitally disabled, a man who had never walked, but not only is his leg healed, he is given the ability to know how to jump and walk. At similar healing occurred in Acts where a knowledge implant, so to speak is given with the physical healing. *Act 3:2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Act 3:3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. Act 3:4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. Act 3:5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Act 3:6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. Act 3:7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. Act 3:8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God*.

This type of miracle has much in common with the creative works of God. We find with Adam that he was created with knowledge and ability. He could understand language, he could reflect and reason, all of this in a man created with age and having no temporal background and experience. *Gen 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou*

mayest freely eat: Gen 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. God had given Adam a knowledge implant, knowledge of good and evil. *Gen 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*.

In Genesis Chapter 11, the Lord splits mankind by confusing his ability to communicate. Here is another "implant" whereby ability and knowledge are acquired instantaneously. This also happens at Pentecost where mankind are reunified by the Spirit of God. *Act 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Act 2:6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. Act 2:7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? Act 2:8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Act 2:9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Act 2:10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Act 2:11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*. Spiritual gifts are direct communications from God of special abilities without any learning curve. *1Co 12:5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 1Co 12:6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 1Co 12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1Co 12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 1Co 12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 1Co 12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 1Co 12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*.

Imagine what life would be like if we could suddenly take a tablet and acquire knowledge and skills. Your careers could take off rapidly. From what we have seen today, clearly God could radically change our lives and the life in the world by changing us and granting us various abilities, instantly.

And I suppose that He has done just that with the gifts of the Spirit, but they have their limitations. So then, if God can give us knowledge directly why do we need the learning process, why is the learning process so important? Why not dispense with it all together?

I think that in general the process of acquisition, the way we acquire knowledge is as important as the knowledge itself. This is borne out in the life of Christ. *Heb 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered*. It is part of the great plan to gather the emotional content of life through experience and not just the rational content through a vicarious implant.

Jesus has been there in person, in reality and we must go the same way. We cannot go through life as mere spectators or religious cinema goers. We have to be in the action. *1Pe 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 1Pe 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 1Pe 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 1Pe 4:18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 1Pe 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator*.

If we suffer we shall reign. 2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.

The miracle worked by Paul and Barnabas, raises them in the sight of the crowd to the level of Gods. Jupiter (Jove) = Zeus (Greek equivalent). The king and father of men, from him man received their blessings and miseries and the Olympic Games were celebrated in his honour.

Interesting that Barnabas is given the more elevated position!

Now I draw your attention to the method of evangelism, and I hope that we might learn and develop our methodology along the same lines.

Paul is not distracted by the strange compliment that he and Barnabas are paid, so that they enter into some theological argument about deity, mythology, culture or any other matter than to declare the true God and get a commitment. Paul only wanted inward belief (commitment) and outward confession. *2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*. Inward belief (commitment) outward confession. *Rom 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*. Examples: *Psa 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Pro 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established*.

I am not saying that this immediately issues in salvation, but it is the first step on the road. We are too often concerned to get people into a church or Bible study house group before we have directed people to Christ. Paul only wanted Christ to be made known. *1Co 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 1Co 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. We therefore should avoid talking about our local church (even though some find it easier to do) because it leads to talking about all but Christ, satan does not want us to talk about Christ. Resolve to talk about Christ.

Note also that they, Paul and Barnabas have gone out to the unbeliever, here in the public arena, they don’t expect the unbeliever to come to them. Jesus did nothing in a corner, let’s follow this example. Many to our shame are “cupboard”

Christians, closet disciples. Just you remember that Jesus made a public declaration for you, He expects the same from you.

Go to people.
Speak of Christ.
Work for a commitment.

The holy indignation which Paul and Barnabas felt made them rent their clothes. We do not find that they rent their clothes when the people vilified them, and spoke of stoning them, they could bear this without disturbance, but when they deified them, and spoke of worshipping them, they could not bear it, but rent their clothes, as being more concerned for God's honour than their own.

Christ had put honour enough upon them in making them apostles, they needed not assume either the honour of princes or the honour of gods.

Let us see how they prevented it.

They ran in among the people, as soon as they heard of it and reasoned with them, crying out, that all might hear, "Sirs, why do you these things?" Why do you go about to make gods of us? It is the most absurd thing you can do.

We also are men of like passions with you. We are men, and therefore you wrong yourselves if you expect that from us which is to be had in God only, and you wrong God if you give that honour to us, or to any other man, which is to be given to God only. We not only have such bodies as you see, but are of like passions with you, we are naturally subject to the same frailties of the human nature, we are not only men, but sinful men and suffering men, and therefore will not be deified."

Our doctrine is directly against it. Must we be added to the number of your gods whose business it is to abolish the gods you have? We preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God. If we should suffer this, we should confirm you in that which it is our business to convert you from. When they preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had nothing to do but to preach the grace of God in Christ, and needed not, as the prophets in dealing with their fathers, to preach against idolatry, but, when they had to deal with the Gentiles, they must rectify their mistakes in natural religion, and bring them off from the gross corruptions of that.

See what they preached to the Gentiles.

First, That the gods which they and their fathers worshipped, and all the ceremonies of their worship of them were *v*anities, idle things, unreasonable, unprofitable, which no rational account could be given of, nor any real advantage gained from. Idols are often called vanities in the Old Testament, Deut. 32:21, Jer. 14:22.

1Co 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

Secondly, that the God to whom they would have them turn is the living God.

Thirdly, that this God is the creator of the world, the fountain of all being and power, He made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things therein. You worship gods which you made, the creatures of your own fancy, and the work of your own hands. We call you to worship the true God, and not cheat yourselves with pretenders, worship the Sovereign Lord of all.

Fourthly, that the world owed it to his patience that He had not destroyed them long before this for their idolatry. In times past, for many ages, unto this day, He suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. These idolaters, that were called from the service of other gods, might think, "Have we not served these gods hitherto, and our fathers before us, time out of mind, and why may we not as well go on to serve them still?" No, your serving them was a trial of God's patience, and it was a miracle of mercy that you were not cut off for it. But, though He did not destroy you for it while you were in ignorance, and knew no better, now that He has sent His gospel into the world, and by it has made a clear revealing of Himself and His will to all nations, and not to the Jews only, if you still continue in your idolatry He will not bear with you as He has done.

All the nations that had not the benefit of Divine revelation, that is, all but the Jews, He suffered to walk in their own ways, for they had nothing to check them, or control them, but their own consciences, their own thoughts (Rom. 2:15), no scriptures, no prophets and then they were the more excusable if they mistook their way, but now that God has sent a revelation into the world which is to be published to all nations the case is altered.

We may understand it as a judgment upon all nations that God suffered them to walk in their own ways, gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, but now the time is come when the veil of the covering spread over all nations should be taken off (Isa. 25:7), and now you will no longer be excused in these vanities, but must turn from them. God's patience with us should lead us to repentance, and not encourage us to presume upon the continuance of it, while we continue to provoke him. Our having done ill while we were in ignorance will not bear us out in doing ill when we are better taught.

Fifthly, that even when they were not under the direction and correction of the word of God, they might have known, and should have known, to do better by the works of God. Though the Gentiles had not the statutes and judgments that the Jews had to witness for God against all pretenders, no tables of testimony or tabernacle of testimony, yet He left not Himself without witness, besides the witness for God within them (the dictates of natural conscience), they had witnesses for God round about them.

Their having no scriptures did in part excuse them, and therefore God did not destroy them for their idolatry, as he did the Jewish nation. This however did not wholly excuse them, in spite of this they were highly criminal and deeply guilty before God, for there were other witnesses for God, sufficient to inform them that He and He only is to be worshipped, and that to Him they owed all their services from whom they received all their comforts, and therefore that they were guilty of the highest injustice and ingratitude imaginable, in alienating them from Him.

God, having not left Himself without witness, has not left us without a guide, and so has left us without excuse, for whatever is a witness for God is a witness against us, if we give that glory to any other which is due to Him only. The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God, for they are all dispensed wisely and with design. The rain and fruitful seasons could not come by chance, nor are there any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain, neither can the heavens of themselves give showers, Jer. 14:22.

All the powers of nature witness to us of a sovereign power in the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. It is not the heaven that gives us rain, but God that gives us rain from heaven. The benefits we have by these bounties witness to us that we ought to make our acknowledgments not to the creatures who are made serviceable to us, but to the Creator who makes them so. He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good. God seems to reckon the instances of His goodness to be more cogent proofs of His title to our homage and adoration than the evidences of His greatness, for His goodness is His glory.

The earth is full of His goodness, his tender mercies are over all His works, and therefore they praise Him, Ps. 145:9, 10. God does us good, in providing to us His air to breathe in, His ground to go upon, the light of His sun to see by, but, because the most sensible instance of the goodness of Providence to each of us in particular is that of the daily provision made by it of meat and drink for us, the apostle chooses to insist upon that, and shows how God does us good, in preparing it for us, and that by a long train of causes which depend upon Him as the first cause.

He does us good in giving us rain from heaven, rain for us to drink, for if there were no rain there would be no springs of water and we should soon die of thirst, rain for our land to drink, for our meat as well as drink we have from the rain; in giving us this, He gives us fruitful seasons. If the heavens be as iron, the earth will soon be as brass, Lev. 26:19.

Of all the common operations of providence, the heathen chose to form their notion of the supreme God by that which bespeaks terror, and is proper to strike an awe of Him upon us, and this was the thunder and therefore they called Jupiter the thunderer, and represented him with a thunderbolt in his hand, and it appears that this ought not to be overlooked, but the apostle here, to engage us to worship God, sets before us His beneficence, that we may have good thoughts of Him in everything wherein we may love Him and delight in Him, as one that does good, does good to us, does good to all, in giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and if at any time rain be withheld, or the seasons be unfruitful, we may thank ourselves, it is our sin that turns away these good things from us which were coming to us, and stops the current of God’s favours.

In giving us the comforts of it, it is He that fills our hearts with food and gladness. God is rich in mercy to all (Rom. 10:12): he gives us richly all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17), is not only a benefactor, but a bountiful one, not only gives us the things we need, but gives us to enjoy them (Eccl. 2:24), He fills our hearts with food, that is, He gives us food to our hearts’ content, or according to our hearts’ desire, not merely for necessity, but plenty, dainty, and variety.

Even those nations that had lost the knowledge of Him, and worshipped other gods, yet He filled their houses, filled their mouths, filled their bellies with good things. The Gentiles that lived without God in the world, yet lived upon God, which Christ urges as a reason why we should do good to those that hate us, Matt. 5:44, 45. Those heathen had their hearts filled with food; this was their satisfaction, they desired no more; but these things will not fill the soul (Ezek. 7:19), nor will those that know how to value their own souls be satisfied with them, but the apostles put themselves in as sharers in the divine beneficence. We must all own that God fills our hearts with food and gladness, not only food, that we may live, but gladness, that we may live cheerfully; to Him we owe it that we do not all our days eat in sorrow. We must thank God, not only for our food, but for our gladness, that He gives us leave to be cheerful, cause to be cheerful, and hearts to be cheerful.

Lastly, by these sayings, with much ado, they restrained the people from doing sacrifice to them, so strongly were these idolaters set upon their idolatry. It was not enough for the apostles to refuse to be deified (this would be construed only a pang of modesty), but they resented it, they showed the people the evil of it, and all little enough, for they could scarcely restrain them from it, and some of them were ready to blame the priest, that he did not go on with his business notwithstanding. We may see here what gave rise to the pagan idolatry. Paul and Barnabas had cured a cripple, and therefore the people deified them, instead of glorifying God for giving them such power, which should make us very cautious that we do not give that honour to another, or take it to ourselves, which is due to God only.

Paul Stoned at Lystra

Act 14:19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Act 14:20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. Act 14:21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Act 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Act 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Paul was miraculously preserved here.

He certainly later referred to this stoning in 2 Corinthians 11:25. It's reasonable to think that Paul remembered Stephen when he was being stoned, and how he had been a part of Stephen's execution.

When Paul was revived, he did not flee the city that stoned him. Instead he immediately went back into it. He had been driven out of Antioch and Iconium by this travelling mob, and he was determined to leave Lystra on his own terms.

Nothing is recorded that happened at Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch in Syria

Act 14:24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Act 14:25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: Act 14:26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. Act 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. Act 14:28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

From Antioch they passed through Pisidia, the province in which Antioch stood, then they came into the province of Pamphylia, the head-city of which was *Perga*, where they had been before (Acts 13:13), and came again to preach the word (Acts 14:25), making a second offer, to see if they were now better disposed than they were before to receive the gospel. What success they had there we are not told, but that then they went down to Attalia, a city of Pamphylia, on the sea-coast.

They didn't stay long at a place, but wherever they went endeavoured to lay a foundation which might afterwards be built upon, and to sow the seeds which would in time produce a great increase. Now Christ's parables were explained, in which He compared the kingdom of heaven to a little leaven, which in time leavened the whole lump, to a grain of mustard-seed, which, though very inconsiderable at first, grew to a great tree, and to the seed which a man sowed in his ground, and it sprung up he knew not how.

At length they came back to Antioch in Syria, whence they had been sent forth upon this expedition. From Attalia they came by sea to Antioch.

Here we are told why they travelled, because thence they had been recommended to the grace of God, and such a value did they put upon a recommendation to the grace of God, though they had themselves a great interest in heaven that they never thought they could show respect enough to those who had so recommended them. The brethren having recommended them to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled, now that they had fulfilled it they thought they owed them a report of it, that they might help them, as they had been helped by their prayers.

They gathered the church together. It is probable that there were more Christians at Antioch than ordinarily met, or could meet, in one place, but on this occasion they called together the leading men of them, as the heads of the tribes are often called the congregation of Israel, so the ministers and principal members of the church at Antioch are called the church. Or perhaps as many of the people as the place would hold came together on this occasion. Or some met at one time, or in one place, and others at another. But when they had called them together, they gave them an account of two things. Of the tokens they had had of the Divine presence with them in their labours. They reported all that God had done with them.

They did not tell what they had done (this would have smelt of vain-glory), but what God had done with them and by them. The praise of all the little good we

do at any time must be ascribed to God, for it is He that not only worketh in us both to will and to do, but then works with us to make what we do successful.

God's grace can do anything without ministers' preaching, but ministers' preaching, even Paul's, can do nothing without God's grace, and the operations of that grace must be acknowledged in the efficacy of the word.

They told how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles, had inclined the hearts of many of them to accept the invitation.

Thus the gospel was spread, and it shone more and more, and none was able to shut this door which God had opened, not all the powers of hell and earth.

Now Paul and Barnabus rest, they abode a long time with the disciples, longer than perhaps at first they intended, not because they feared their enemies, but because they loved their friends, and were loath to part from them.

Acts Chapter 15

We had left Paul and Barnabas in Antioch of Syria and they come across to Jerusalem to see if they can resolve the friction that arose between believing Jews.

I initially found this chapter daunting, so many questions and implications, I can only promise that I have tried hard to do it justice.

Although this chapter is designated the Council of Jerusalem I note that the word council is not used once in this chapter. Previously there were councils, the main one being the great Sanhedrim, sitting at Jerusalem who charged Jesus with blasphemy.

Jesus had warned about them. *Mat 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;*

This council, the council of Jerusalem is different, it comprised believers.

The Jerusalem Council

Act 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. Act 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. Act 15:3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. Act 15:4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and

they declared all things that God had done with them. Act 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

In verse 2 they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them**,** that is, the members of the church at Antioch, taking this matter into consideration, and finding that the difference could not be ignored, for the peace of the church, wisely came to a resolution, and made an order, that Paul and Barnabas, with others, as Titus, who possibly went with Paul at this time, as appears from Gal 2:1 and some others of the brethren, and it may be also certain, on the other side of the question, that these **sh**ould go up to Jerusalem, unto the apostles and elders, about this question**,** concerning circumcision, and the necessity of it to salvation

Gal 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. Gal 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up. Many of those who opposed Paul and Barnabas were Christians who had been Pharisees. The Pharisees were well known for their high regard for the law, and their desire to obey the law in the smallest details.

If the Pharisees believed anything, they believed one could be justified before God by keeping the law. For a Pharisee to really be a Christian, it would take more than an acknowledgment that Jesus was Messiah, he would have to forsake his attempts to justify himself by the keeping of the law and accept the work of Jesus as the basis of his justification.

In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas did not allow the pagans to merely add Jesus to their pantheon of Roman gods. They commanded that they had to turn from their vain gods to the true God. These Pharisees who had become Christians had to do the same thing, turn from their efforts to earn their way before God by keeping the law, and look to Jesus. You can't just add Jesus and now say "Jesus helps me to justify myself through keeping the law."

Paul himself was a former Pharisee (Philippians 3:5) who became a Christian. But he came to know that Jesus didn't help him do what a Pharisee did, only better. He knew that Jesus was his salvation, not the way to his salvation. Paul wrote: *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified*. (Galatians 2:16)

Act 15:6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. Act 15:7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. Act 15:8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; Act 15:9 And put no

difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Act 15:10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Act 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Act 15:12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Act 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Act 15:14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. Act 15:15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, Act 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: Act 15:17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Act 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Act 15:19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. Act 15:21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Who was there? Named and definite are Paul, Barnabus, Peter, James, Silas and Judas Barsabas and Titus. The rest we are not told.

Problem Solving In the Church at Large.

The controversy arises as a result of some Judean Christians making circumcision an essential to salvation. The words “having come down” suggest from the way we view the world that these men had come from the North of Antioch. In fact they had come from the heartland of the gospel where the church had, after a manner of speaking its capital. From the seat of truth an error is propagated.

This shows us that the early church did not gather a definition body of doctrine (or divinity) very quickly. It was not I suggest completely in possession of all truth from the moment of Pentecost. We have already noted that Peter needed re-educating. *Act 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: Act 10:35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. Act 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all :) Act 10:37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; Act 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

Again the incident here in Acts Chapter 15 is indicative of the formative process whereby the church came to know more clearly its mission and purpose together with its beliefs.

Indeed, we have seen the same process amongst ourselves, as over the years, various circumstances and the grace of God enlightened us to the needed truth.

We must see here then, that the providence of God works to provoke discipleship and a deeper examination of truth. Although I shall not answer it here, I will raise the thought or perhaps question, was the conclusion of this council, the final and definitive statement on the subject of mans relationship to law? We shall come back to this, but if you consider it, the whole controversy here is concerned with the idea of truth developing or static! If static then circumcision wins the day or does it?

Let us make some general observations on this passage:-

Differences between brethren will arise, that is to be expected. Controversy can benefit for a number of reasons, a) It can help us clarify our thoughts and define our beliefs more clearly (as here). b) It will bring out the leaders in the church who are approved. *1Co 11:19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*.

We are taught that differences can be solved. They didn't walk out on the problem, they walked squarely into the problem. They didn't shelve a difference, they worked to solve it. They used the forum of multiple eldership and Apostles for this very purpose, to solve differences between churches. So then, sectarianism can lead to unity with the right attitude. That attitude can be summed up in patience and willingness to solve problems.

Let us move on to consider the areas of problems arising in this passage.

> Lack of doctrinal oversight by the Judean church. It was not bought by the elders or the Apostles.
>
> Lack of confidence in the saving work of the Lord Jesus. It needed extensions to make it work!
>
> Lack of knowledge of the limits of Biblical truth (i.e. circumcision in the flesh superseded by the work of Christ).
>
> Ignorance of the work of Christ on the cross.
>
> Tradition and group pressure, rather than truth sway the crowd. Links with Galatians chapter 2 where the roots are discussed.
>
> Lack of firm leadership and oversight.
>
> Going beyond, apostle's directives and troubling.
>
> Doctrinal incompetence.

So then, this single issue has unearthed a whole "can of worms". I will also suggest that it is not unrelated to the incidents in Galatians Chapter 2. While it is not absolutely possible to date the two events (here in Acts and as recalled in

Galatians), I suggest the following relationships between the passages. I shall not enter into contention over it as regards the timing (that is an area for those who wish to pour over the details), but as far as the substance the issues are the same.

Gal 2:1Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. Gal 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Gal 2:3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: Gal 2:4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: Gal 2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. Gal 2:6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: Gal 2:7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; Gal 2:8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) Gal 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Gal 2:10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. Gal 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? Gal 2:15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Gal 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Gal 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. Gal 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. Gal 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Gal 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Act 15:30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Act 15:31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. Act 15:32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. Act 15:33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the Apostles. Act 15:34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. Act 15:35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

If this is true, it indicates that the issue, although solved in theory, left a lot to be desired in practice. Again we would see Peter the apostle in a position of compromise. This is not uncommon, it happens with head coverings, family discipline and church discipline. Let us and all the churches note how easy it is to fall into doctrinal error and compromise. We should be even more on our guard bearing in mind that an apostle can fail!

Next we shall examine the issue of the contention, circumcision, in more detail and the methodology employed in coming to a solution.

The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers.

Act 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: Act 15:23 And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Act 15:24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: Act 15:25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Act 15:26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Act 15:27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. Act 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; Act 15:29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. Act 15:30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Act 15:31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. Act 15:32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. Act 15:33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. Act 15:34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. Act 15:35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Letters were sent to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, we do not have a copy of these.

The Council of Jerusalem Part 1

The issue appears to be that circumcision was essential to salvation. However by the way that the Apostles answer, it would appear that they are addressing another question "should the Gentiles (Greeks etc) be subject to the rigours of the Mosaic Law?

Two arguments are put forward to make the case against this idea.

The first may be summed up simply as "God does not go backwards". *Act 15:7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. Act 15:8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; Act 15:9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Act 15:10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Act 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.* This is an argument from experience, knowing that God had made Himself known to the Gentiles.

There was no requirement for circumcision then, so why should there be now? Has God changed the terms of reference? Certainly not, God does not go backwards. Indeed we may respectfully use the argument of Paul in Galatians, that if God rebuilt that which He had destroyed, it would be transgression. *Gal 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.* Where could we be confident that it would not happen again?

I am sadly disappointed with those Christians who have this very attitude today. It is seen with respect to prophecy. There are those who believe that the Old Testament worship, sacrifice etc will be reinstated for the Jews, in a rebuilt temple and that somehow God will be pleased to accept this from them. Utter rubbish. Christ has destroyed by His death, the whole fabric of Old Testament worship. *Col 2:14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; Col 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Col 2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*.

As a matter of fact the first covenant could not work righteousness only Jesus could. *Heb 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Heb 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Heb 10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Heb 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. Heb 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Are we then to believe that "taking away the first" means that it will be bought back for the Jews. No, that is not only rebuilding what has been destroyed, a sinful act according to Paul, it is a slur upon the work of Christ and blasphemy. Clearly as Peter observed in his own day, Jews will be saved in the same manner as Gentiles. *Act 15:11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.* Note the form of words. He does not put the Jews first and Gentile second saying "they shall be saved like us". He does not adopt a superior position, rather he adopts the inferior position "we shall be saved even as they".

Are we really then to believe that despite what Peter says, God will revise His terms for a future generation of Jews? No of course not. Salvation is by the grace (favour) of God, not by works. *Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*. Besides says Peter in closing his case, we could not bear the yoke of the law ourselves.

The second argument is drawn from the Old Testament scripture. What they were seeing, respecting Gentile conversions was foretold years before. *Act 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Act 15:14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. Act 15:15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, Act 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: Act 15:17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Act 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*.

Amo 9:9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. Amo 9:10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us. Amo 9:11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: Amo 9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. Amo 9:13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes

him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. Amo 9:14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. Amo 9:15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

There was to be a restoration of Israel by "Great David's greater son". Amos says in effect, this is what is happening. The Tabernacle of David, more correctly here means booth or hut or Tabernacle is being rebuilt.

This immediately links us back to the Old feast of booths. *Lev 23:34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. Lev 23:39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. Lev 23:40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. Lev 23:41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Lev 23:42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: Lev 23:43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

Tabernacles or booths were built as a declaration and reminder that God had delivered the people from Egypt. The restoration of David's Tabernacle goes hand in hand with deliverance in exactly the same way. Israel says Paul does not look forward to a future restoration (we have already spoken of this), it is already going on now in Paul's day.

The language of the Old Testament must be clearly seen to have its meaning in the church.

Heb 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. The New Covenant is with Israel that is you and I, we are true Israelites.

Heb 8:8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. (see argument of Paul, *Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*.)

We are true Jews. *Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

I have laboured the point. The prophecy quoted makes it quite clear that Israel of old would be reconstituted and as part of that restoration would be composed of Old Testament Jews and Gentiles. *Amo 9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this*.

Conclusion: Since God is clearly at work bringing all this to pass, why hinder this or trouble this work?

These two arguments are very simple despite the time we have spent exploring their content. They have not gone into the details of circumcision and this is developed in the later epistles of Paul (Romans, Galatians and Colossians). However they have developed a "holding pattern" so to speak, and for the time being resolve the issue at the level necessary.

Let me finally make some points from the Old Testament relating to circumcision, which you will find as the basis of Paul's later arguments in Romans.

Circumcision was a sign or token of the covenant.

Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. It effectively sealed the act of faith.

Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Gen 15:18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

Now note this, Genesis Chapter 15 is about events that occur at least 13 years before Genesis Chapter 17, Ishmael wasn't born in Genesis chapter 15. *Gen 17:24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.*

Gen 17:25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. Gen 17:26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.

This means that Abraham had been in covenant for thirteen years without being circumcised, so it was not a primary matter for salvation.

This is the argument Paul develops. *Rom 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Rom 4:10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

Also the Old Testament shows that circumcision of the flesh was worthless without an inner change and that this change can only be effected by God.

Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

Deu 30:6 And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Col 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: Col 2:11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Col 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

The Council of Jerusalem Part 2.

Exhortation on sticking to decisions! “The better the day, the better the deed” is a wicked saying, yet we allow our firm judgements to waver on just such a premise. Beware of such double minded, instability.

Before moving on from this section, I want to examine the conclusions of this council and their wider implications. The findings are:

Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.	*Act 15:29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*
Pollution of idols	Meats offered to idols
Fornication	Blood
Strangled	Strangled
Blood	Fornication

You will see that the orders are different and so I would conclude that the order is not necessarily significant. This also to me adds a touch of authenticity, since the writer (Luke) has made no attempt at harmonisation.

Now are these prohibitions temporary expedients? Are they given as “stop gap” measures so to speak, until further consideration had been given? Is this doctrinal position expanded and modified at a later date? I suggest that the answer is yes!

The whole issue before us, as suggested was the relationship of the Gentile (Greek) to the Law of Moses. Incidentally you will note that circumcision was not given under the Law of Moses, it predated it by some 500 years. The Law of

Moses embraced circumcision and acted as an outward token of being part of the covenant nation. The Jews here in Acts were using circumcision as a “test case”, to find out how the Gentile related to the whole of the Old Testament.

The ideas of how we Gentiles function, in relation to the Law of Moses is developed in later epistles to the church. Clearly the answers in Acts left much to be desired by the enquiring mind. How for example, if we have no law, can we chart the progress of good and evil in our lives? Surely we create a state of “anything goes”? How could we play a game, as a team if the game had no rules? This might prove an interesting exercise. We cannot of course.

So Paul in the later writings to the church answers some of the difficulties.

> Law cannot justify or make you right with God however hard you work. Christ can. Gal 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.
>
> Law cannot sanctify however much you obey. The Spirit can. *Rom 8:40 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Gal 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*
>
> Law cannot give you life. The Spirit can! *Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

Clearly as far as the system goes we are under grace not law. *Rom 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace*. But we must ask ourselves, what law? Christ may be the end of the law, but what law? The Law of Moses, or law in a more universal sense? Are we totally without laws? *Rom 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*.

If the law had been totally removed, in all aspects, what right have the Apostles to seemingly impose a few selective laws upon the Gentiles? The Gentiles could rightly say “we are going back under law”, however slightly. Is not the conclusion of Acts Chapter 15 verse 20 a concession and compromise to law? Law is law, it makes no distinction between moral, ceremonial or civil. Why should the Gentiles accept any?

Put yourself in the position of a 1st Century Greek. Culturally he had a pagan background, pantheism, mysticism. Sex rituals were part of his sacred worship. He could buy his food in the market that had been shared with his gods in the temples. He cared little for the isolated, fastidious Jews with their detailed rituals. When the Greek got saved, it was through looking at Jesus not coming under law. *Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*. But how compatible was Jesus with the old pagan lifestyle? Clearly the Greek needed redirection.

Here, the Christians doctrine of conscience is developed. In order for conscience to function it requires rules to help it discriminate circumstances. Let's face it, changing the word law to rules or to principles does not solve the problem. Conscience requires laws, observable behaviour patterns. Observable behaviour can only be approved or condemned if we have some law that sets the criteria. I can only say fornication is wrong if I have some agreed boundaries for human relationships, i.e. the laws of marriage.

So the New Testament affirms that we are not under the Law of Moses, but we are certainly not without law or lawless. The question we have to answer is how do we get to know the laws that we should obey? Are we left with some arbitrary "pick and mix" from the Old Testament? Have we rendered the Old Testament totally useless in terms of getting our principles of conduct, such that we become a law unto ourselves?

Let us then recapitulate the position arrived at in Acts chapter 15.

> Moses' Law, as a system is not applicable to Gentiles.
> Certain concessions are made for conscience sake.
> Morality requires laws.

These positions are expanded in later writings.

> "Not under law...." For both justification and sanctification.
>
> The conscience. Rom Chapter 14, *1Co 8:7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 1Co 8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 1Co 8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 1Co 8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 1Co 8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 1Co 8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 1Co 8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. 1Co 10:25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: 1Co 10:26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 1Co 10:27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 1Co 10:28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: 1Co 10:29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? 1Co 10:30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 1Co 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Our freedoms must not cause offence and our liberty must not occasion stumbling.*

I think the rules of Acts 15:20 are on account of the Jewish conscience (a weak conscience).

The laws of morality in the New Testament are required to distinguish the fruit of the spirit from the works of the flesh. These are tests of life. John's pastoral epistles are full of these little tests. *1Jn 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*. Having these laws, we avoid satanic deception.

Now you are most probably waiting for me to answer the question "what laws are relevant for the New Testament church, and where do they come from? Having thrown out Moses what sources are left? Well firstly I haven't rejected Moses. As a system and it must be viewed as a system, if we put ourselves under it, to obey it, it must be in its entirety. *Deu 27:26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen*. If I consent to its validity, if I make it the standard, as Rushdoony did I am under it all!

Those who believe in weekly Sabbaths are obliged to the yearly Sabbaths. Those who obey the tithe are obliged to observe new moons. If you accept Moses' Law as relevant you have no reason to discard bits of it that you don't like for example the death sentence for Sabbath breaking. So we are not under the system, we make no concession to it, yet we acknowledge within it abiding principles, many of which are descriptive of Christ and His ministry.

We also note that before Moses there were laws i.e. that of blood and marriage, so there are some much longer term laws in operation.

Gen 9:4 But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. Gen 9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Gen 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

Gen 12:18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Gen 12:19 Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

Again though the Sabbath and circumcision are in operation in Genesis, why reject them?

In discerning laws for the church, I make the following suggestions:

Laws are not to be used like handcuffs or chains to outwardly restrain sinful flesh (like the Gadarene). They are more properly signposts to those walking in the paths of righteousness.

The outward imposition doesn't work inward. We need the inward to work the outward. Law must be on the heart and that is God's work. *Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those*

days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: Heb 8:11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

Law does not check carnality, spirituality alone does that. *Rom 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. Rom 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Rom 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Rom 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Rom 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

The growth in you spiritually, which is a growth in stature towards Christ, is also a growth in mental attitudes and understanding of His person. It is to be sought and proved. *Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*.

The more we grow like Him, the more we shall know Him and by that process, we shall see in Scripture, those things that reflect His work and those that reflect His character. For example we see the “Sabbath” as an expression of His work, thus we no longer observe the day, but celebrate the person. *Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days*:

We have begun the process of discerning Christ in the laws of the Old Testament.

When we observe Christ in His character, we see His desire for Holiness, that we the church be like Him, the bride and groom. This is a moral issue that has implications in the sphere of daily life. *Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Eph 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Eph 5:24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, Eph 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*. These verses are based on the conclusion that we must develop earthly relationships that mirror the heavenly.

In order to gain greater understanding of the knowledge of good and evil in the church, we need a greater measure of the Spirit of Christ.

Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. Carnality is a sign of immaturity and disorder.

1Co 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. 1Co 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

Christ brings order and law through spiritual growth.
Spiritual growth will also lead to a more sensitive conscience.

In conclusion, the Christian develops his laws and codes of conduct from a growing relationship with Christ, not from tables of stone. Relevance is derived not from making distinction between ceremonial, moral and civil laws, but from the very nature and person of Christ. *1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law*.

Paroxysm.

Paul and Barnabas Separate

Act 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. Act 15:37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. Act 15:38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. Act 15:39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; Act 15:40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. Act 15:41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Many Christians make this event an open and shut case against Barnabas, making him in the wrong and implying that his ministry also became ineffective as a result of this heated argument.

However against that, we may consider the providence of God provoking these two saints and by this seeming division, doubling the effort, making two groups out of one. Instead of a large group consisting of Paul, Barnabas, Silas and John Mark, we see two groups going out.

Barnabas, a charitable man, a Jew goes to his native Cyprus and Paul starts his journey that will see the gospel entering Europe for the first time. *Act 4:36 And Joses, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus*.

John Mark you recall came from Judea and it was at his mother’s house, that Peter arrived after escaping from Herod. *Act 12:11 And when Peter was come to*

himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. Act 12:12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. He joins the missionaries, but for some reason at Perga John Mark goes back to Jerusalem. *Act 13:4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. Act 13:5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. Act 13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Act 13:7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. Act 13:8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Act 13:9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, Act 13:10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Act 13:11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Act 13:12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. Act 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.*

The implication of Acts Chapter 15 verse 38 is that Mark lacked for whatever reason, a total commitment to the work. That apart, here in Antioch we find Mark, so he has moved away from his native Jerusalem and does not appear an unwilling party to the new missionary values.

Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus:

Since Barnabas was John Mark's uncle, and because Barnabas had such an encouraging, accepting character (Acts 4:36, 9:26-27), it is easy to see why he would be more understanding towards John Mark. *Col 4:10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)*

Perhaps Mark is now fully committed and Barnabas for one is prepared to give the man another chance. He knows that we as saints often fail of the grace of God, but that does not make us unfit for service. In Hebrews Chapter 11 there is a list of saints who are set as examples of the faith. Yet those examples often came short and failed. God did not erase their good points because of their failures, neither did it disqualify them from service.

Barnabas himself has recently failed and we suggested that failure was associated with Peter's visit to Antioch, just prior to this journey. *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the*

Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. Gal 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

No doubt, still smarting from this dissembling and Pauls rebuke, Barnabas knows he can put failure behind him. It may be from this experience that he can act kindly towards John Mark. What better illustration of brotherly love and mutual assistance could you find? *Mat 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. Mat 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Mat 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Mat 7:4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Mat 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye*.

Paul on the other hand is the great pragmatist, one who sees things in clearly terms, black and white with sharp edges. He finds little problem in coming to terms with God’s word and is extremely intolerant of failure. He is not prepared to see the work of God put in jeopardy by taking along someone who may be unreliable. Paul is wary of novices. *1Ti 3:6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.* We may sympathise with Paul here.

So then, we may see that there are cases that support the two protagonists. Barnabas the Godly charitable, but not too independent brother, prepared to forgive and forget, the man who acts as an enabler and initially fetched Paul to begin his work. Paul the doctrinal giant, given over to the gospel, not prepared to let the flesh wreck the work.

Time did not allow a resolution and so they parted on not very good terms. However that is not the end of the story. Barnabas goes on to better things and Paul some years later writing to the Corinthians cites Barnabas as a power for the gospel and on par with himself. *1Co 9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? 1Co 9:2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord. 1Co 9:3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, 1Co 9:4 Have we not power to eat and to drink? 1Co 9:5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? 1Co 9:6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?* The Corinthians must have known Barnabas, so it would seem that Paul again is working with Barnabas and reconciled with him.

In due time, Paul also comes to see that Barnabas’ choice was not all that bad. *2Ti 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is*

profitable to me for the ministry. When things were tough, Mark appears as the one profitable for the ministry. Mark has grown into a man, and who knows whether this division was the spur to prove his worth?

Later, Paul came to minister with John Mark and to value his contributions to the work of God (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11). We don't know if it was Mark who changed or Paul who changed. Probably God had a work to do in both of them!

Conclusions:

> Paroxysms and disputes can lead to an advance of the gospel and strengthening of individual character. People have things to prove.
> It does not mean people lose respect or cease to fellowship with each other.
> The work declares whether the decisions were right and wise. Perhaps Paul was short sighted.

Paul chose Silas. Silas (also called Silvanus in several passages) became an important part of Paul's team in doing the work of the ministry.

· Silas was recognized as one of the leading men among the brethren (Acts 15:22).

· Silas was a prophet (Acts 15:32).

· Silas was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37).

· Silas probably spoke Greek (comparing Acts 15:22 and 15:32).

· Silas wrote out one of Peter's letters (1 Peter 5:12) and maybe some of Paul's (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

Galatians and James.

Chronological Bible diverts to Galatians and then James here.

From what we know in Scripture, Paul met with Peter three times (Galatians 1:15–18 in Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter, Acts 15 & Galatians 2:1–10 for the Jerusalem Council, Galatians 2:11–21 in Antioch to rebuke Peter), and with James the Lord's brother three times.

Gal 1:17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. Gal 1:19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face,

because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. This is Syrian Antioch, there is no mention of Peter visiting the Other Antioch.

The most crucial factor in dating the letter to the Galatians is the relationship between the journey of Paul to Jerusalem mentioned in Gal 2.1 and the Jerusalem council in Acts Chapter 15. If the decision of the council in Acts Chapter 15 had been common knowledge when the letter was written then Paul would surely have used the councils' decision in defence of Gentile freedom and especially in his rebuke of Peter. Gal 2.11 to 13. It is therefore possible that Galatians is Pauls earliest letter and written by AD 49 just prior to the Jerusalem council of Act 15. Those who associate Pauls account in Galatians 2 1 – 10 with the Jerusalem visit in Acts 18 22 date this letter to AD 53 and thus after the Thessalonian letters.

The destination of this letter to Galatia was a group of churches that Paul himself had founded Gal 1 2, 8 9, and 4 19. His close relationship with them is reflected in 4 11 – 14.

Until the 18th Century most readers understood Galatia to be the territory in the heart of Asian Minor whose boundaries included Bithynia and Pontus on the north, Phrygia on the south west and Cappadocia the east. However the book of Acts offers no record of Paul evangelising in this area other than brief hints. Act 16.6 18.23.

The south Galatian theory understands Galatia to refer to the Roman province of Pauls day which included Psidia, Lycaonia and parts of Phyrgia and Cappadocia. Also included were the cities of Antioch, Lystra and Derbe and Iconium which Paul visited on his first Journey and second Journeys.

The letter of James' author is identified as James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The name James has usually been identified with the James who led the church in Jerusalem. Paul referred to this James as the Lord's brother and included him among the apostles. He also characterised him as one of the pillars of the church. Gal 2. When Peter left Palestine James seems to have become the leader of the Jerusalem church. Since the early centuries however there has been disagreement about whether James the Lord's brother actually wrote this letter. There are no allusions to a personal relationship with Jesus and indeed Jesus is only mentioned twice. Both the quality of the letters Greek and the structure of its arguments have suggested to some that the author was a Hellenistic Jew rather than a Jew from Palestine. If so then the letter is pseudonymous and the actual author associated the work with James the Just as he was later known by using his name. It is also possible that the letter was written by a Hellenistic Jew actually named James who is otherwise unknown to us.

No evidence determines exactly when the letter was written. Scholars who believe the work to be an authentic work of James the Just necessarily date it before his martyrdom. Since the letter does not hint at any controversy over the

issue of circumcision some would date it before the council of Jerusalem. Others however would place it after the controversy had died down. Those who view the letter as pseudonymous usually date it in the last quarter of the first century.

Acts Chapter 16.

Guidance

Act 16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Act 16:2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Act 16:3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. Act 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the Apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. Act 16:5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily. Act 16:6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, Act 16:7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. Act 16:8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. Act 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. Act 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

We learn here that Timothy is already a disciple and we may consider that he is also already a convert of Paul's ministry. *1Ti 1:2 Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord*. It would therefore appear that Paul had made some foray into Derbe and Lystra.

Now Timothy was the product of a mixed marriage, his mother was a Jew and his father a Greek. His mother had also been converted to the Christian faith. His mother's name is Eunice who descended from Lois who was a faithful woman. *2Ti 1:5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also*. These people taught Timothy the Scriptures more especially I suppose his mother. *2Ti 3:15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*.

On the face of it Timothy appears to come from a good Bible believing Jewish family, but is this true?

Firstly Eunice had married outside of the faith, creating an unequal yoke that was scorned under the law. She had married an uncircumcised man, a Greek, who was outside of the covenant. It would have been possible for him to enter the covenant. The father may have died or left the marriage. Certainly the father is not listed among those who taught Timothy the Bible. But why in the first place did the Jewish woman Eunice, marry the Greek?

Secondly Timothy has not been circumcised. This was necessary on the 8th day as a sign of the covenant. *Gen 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed*. Now you may say, well Timothy was born after the resurrection and therefore circumcision was unnecessary. However, I do not think that the timescales (here it is AD52) allow that line of reasoning, particularly as it was many years before the gospel reached these Jewish outposts. Why then did Eunice not do it, just as Zipporah? *Exo 4:24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Exo 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. Exo 4:26 So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision*.

I don't think that all is as rosy as at first appears and some compromises were made! Timothy was brought up more as a Greek than a Jew. So why does Paul bother to circumcise him now? It didn't seem to bother the Jews before. Why not abide in that state and argue the case from Acts Chapter 15, since Timothy was really a Gentile?

Paul had just berated Peter and had made a stand against circumcisions for the Gentiles. *Gal 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. Gal 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Gal 2:3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised*.

It almost appears that he, himself is compromising. However I think he acts for the sake of the Jewish conscience and on principle. *1Co 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 1Co 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you*. We see the need of Christians to be flexible and yielding. This however is by no means a compromise.

A subject I want to touch on is guidance. I have suggested that the use of the phrase "led by the spirit" applies Biblical teaching of the Holy Spirit leading us to

Christ. However, many Christians use the phrase incorrectly to describe personal guidance or direction by supernatural means. Properly it refers to leading into the things of God, the new life. *Rom 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*. To say I was led to do this, marry that one, go to this place is not a correct Biblical usage of leading.

In fact I go so far as to suggest that supernatural spiritual guidance is a rarity rather than a common phenomenon.

Act 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. A

Act 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: Act 9:4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Act 9:5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Act 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Act 10:3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

Act 10:10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.

Act 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Act 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

You may of course argue that the New Testament book of Acts is not a complete record of all that happened and I would agree with this. However, as far as principle and example go, the cases cited are given to the leaders of the early church, not to all and sundry. This of course is in keeping with order and chain of command that is structured guidance through the leaders. Here in Acts Chapter 16 verse 9 it is Paul, not everyone who gets the vision and the frequency occurrence is low.

As a general rule for practice, we have a commission to fulfil, namely to spread the gospel and we go about that task in accordance with Biblical principles unless God intervenes by providence or direct revelation to the contrary as in v 10. We are not talking about leading, but directing.

In general, we should act according to principles of Romans Chapter 1.

1. We propose a course of action. *Rom 1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.*
2. We pray over this work. That is we put it before the Lord (commit your way). Commit the plan. *Rom 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you*.
3. We outline clear aims. *Rom 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; Rom 1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Rom 1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles*.

In other words we work according to the wisdom God has given us, unless Divine intervention directs otherwise. It is similar to the parable of the vineyard. *Mar 12:1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. Mar 12:2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. Mar 12:3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. Mar 12:4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. Mar 12:5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Mar 12:6 Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. Mar 12:7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. Mar 12:8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. Mar 12:9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. Mar 12:10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: Mar 12:11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes*?

We are stewards of God’s vineyard, just as Adam in Eden, there are degrees of freedom in which we move. *Gen 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof*.

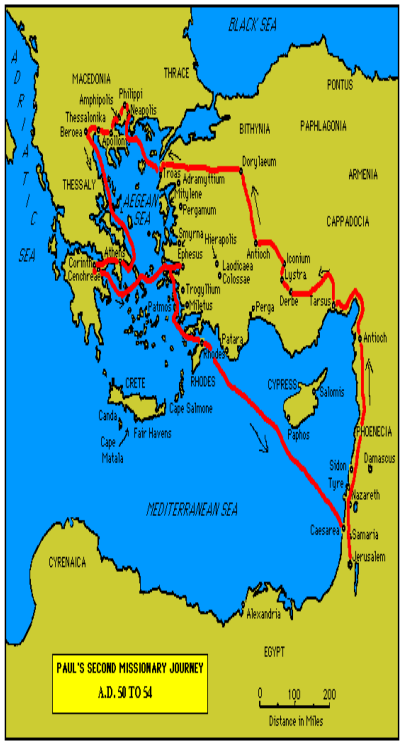
There is also a sense in which we act under guidance without consciousness of it. *Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*. Yet knowing this, we must still act with consciousness of God, taking nothing for granted in this

life. *Jas 4:13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Jas 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Jas 4:15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that*.

I would suggest that if we are conscious of the need for a particular course of action (perhaps directed through scripture or prompted by conscience) and this action is not sinful and does not involve sinful actions on our part, then we are free to act. I do not think that the lottery approach is to be adopted. But we should act in prayer acknowledging providence, God willing for it may be that God will intervene to the contrary.

James Chapter 4 verse 13 is not necessarily a wrong choice of action or sinful, what is wrong is that God had been left out of the plan.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey.



They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After strengthening the churches in the region, Paul sought to go next to the south-west, towards the important city of Ephesus. Yet, Paul was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go there, yet.

We note with interest that the Holy Spirit actually forbade Paul to do something we normally think of as good, preaching God's Word to those who need it. Yet

the Spirit of God directed this work, and Paul wasn't the right person in the right place at the right time to begin bringing the gospel to the Roman Province of Asia Minor. There was certainly nothing wrong with Paul's desire to preach the word in Asia, but it wasn't God's timing, so this was forbidden by the Holy Spirit.

It is difficult to say exactly how the Holy Spirit said no, it may have been through a word of prophecy, or by an inward speaking of the Holy Spirit, or by circumstances. One way or another, Paul and his company got the message. Ephesus would come later, not now.

Asia does not refer to the Far East as we know it today. It refers to the Roman Province of Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey.

They tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. After they attempt to go to Asia, Paul sought to go north into Bithynia, but was again prevented by the Holy Spirit. So, they came down to Troas. It feels like Paul is stabbing in the dark, rather than listening here, two tries are rejected.

Paul didn't set out to go to Troas. It was at least the third choice for him. But it was the Holy Spirit's plan to lead him there. Paul, beautifully responsive to the Holy Spirit, was willing to lay down his will and his plans for the direction that the Holy Spirit brings.

Paul was guided by hindrance. The Holy Spirit often guides as much by the closing of doors as He does by the opening of doors.

David Livingstone wanted to go to China, but God sent him to Africa. William Carey wanted to go to Polynesia, but God sent him to India. Adoniram Judson went to India, but God guided him to Burma. God guides us along the way, to just the right place.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. In Troas, God made Paul's direction clear. In a vision, Paul was invited to the region of Macedonia, westward across the Aegean Sea.

This moved Paul and his missionary team from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe, this was the first missionary endeavour to Europe.

The wisdom and greatness of God's plan was beginning to unfold. In Paul's mind, he wanted to reach a few cities in his region. But God wanted to give Paul a continent to win for Jesus Christ.

A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." The Macedonian man wanted help. So Paul went to bring Macedonia the gospel, the best possible help.

The greatest help we can bring anyone is the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. It is good for us to bring other help along with the gospel, but without the gospel, little real help is given.

Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go. Paul did not hesitate to answer the call of the Macedonian man. Paul's missionary team did not hesitate to follow him on the basis of this call. This was a strong, godly man, leading a strong, godly team.

God still calls people to the mission field, and He may call through unusual ways. It's still possible for a type of Macedonian Man to give an unusual call to serve God in a distant place. When that happens, it's important to respond the way Paul and his team did.

Immediately we sought to go. The shift from they (they came down to Troas, Acts 16:8) to we in this verse probably means that Luke joined the band of missionaries in Troas. Luke's role is not explained, scribe, missionary or perhaps he even came as Paul's personal doctor. I think he was intrigued, curios to observe firsthand the Spreading of the Gospel.

Now we see another reason why they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. We see another reason why the Spirit did not permit them to go into Bithynia. God wanted Paul and his team to go to Troas and pick up with a doctor named Luke. Because God said "no" to Paul these two times, we have a gospel and a Book of Acts written by Doctor Luke.

At the time, Paul probably had no idea of the greatness of God's purpose. God wanted to give him a continent for Jesus, to give him a personal doctor, and to give all of us the man whom God would use to write more of the New Testament than anyone else did. God knows what He is doing when he says, "No."

They are however told to go to Macedonia.

The Conversion of Lydia.

Act 16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; Act 16:12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. Act 16:13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. Act 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. Act 16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Note that they are in Philippi but Lydia is from Thyracia. Probably she is a Greek, but in Turkey.

Understanding the Background

Sailing from Troas. Paul and his missionary team (now including Luke) had to sail across the Aegean Sea, from the continent of Asia to the continent of Europe. This was a big step, perhaps bigger than Paul even knew.

"That they 'sailed straight for Samothrace' is quite revealing, because this is a nautical expression that means the wind was at their backs. So perfect were the

winds that they sailed 156 miles in just two days, whereas returning the other way at a later time (Acts 20:6) it took five days." (Hughes)

From there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia. Paul here followed a plan to plant churches in the major cities. He knew that it was easier for the gospel to spread from these cities than to these cities.

Philippi was "the place where the armies of Mark Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius in the decisive battle of the second Roman civil war in 42 B.C." (Hughes) Because of this, many Roman soldiers retired in the area, and Philippi was proud of its Roman connection.

Act 16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis.

There is a difference between reading the Bible and studying the Bible. Often when we read the Bible we get an overall picture of what is occurring, but in doing so we miss the finer points and fine detail. It is the difference between standing at a distance and looking at a picture or work of art and moving closer to find some unexpected detail.

Let me illustrate here in Acts Chapter 16.

Who went with Paul to Macedonia? Earlier in Acts we see Paul taking Silas and on route he picks up Mark.

Act 15:40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

Act 16:3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

But there is another person with them.

Act 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Act 16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis.

We find the words "us" and "we". Who is this mystery person? I take it to be the writer of Acts. *Act 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Luk 1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us*.

I would suggest that it was the "beloved physician" namely Luke himself. You see here is a detail that is often passed over or entirely missed.

Historical background is sometimes important in enabling us to understand what is going on. For example, why are the Macedonians afraid of the Romans? *Act 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of*

Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. They appear to have two sets of rules, one for Romans and another for the rest.

This Macedonian city was named after the father of Alexander the Great, Philip 2. Alexander's great conquests succeeded in uniting the lands around the Mediterranean and encouraging the common language Greek, which enabled the rapid spread of the gospel.

You will note that Paul even writes to the Romans in Greek. In 42 BC a great battle was fought at Philippi between those famous figures Anthony and Octavian verses Brutus and Cassius (sounds like wrestling). The town was then established as a colony, a Roman colony. *Act 16:12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days*.

Colony comes from the Latin word colo, which means to till or cultivate. These colonies were outposts of the empire, settlements with a strategic value (I suppose like our military bases abroad). The citizens of colonies were often veterans or the unemployed of Rome, but although separated from their native land, they had all of the legal rights and titles as if they had been in Italy, they were subject to the jurisdiction of the parent state. Any Roman resident in a Roman colony had the right to expect Roman justice! To ill treat a Roman would of course incur the wrath of Rome, which is why those who imprisoned Paul got worried. Paul was a Roman!

I love that God used the Roman Empire as a stepping stone for spreading the Gospel.

On the Sabbath Paul went out to seek the Jews, to evangelise them. *Act 16:13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither*. There does not appear to have been a Synagogue at Philippi, which appears to have been very pagan, so the faithful went outside the city to pray. Meetings were clearly not a male preserve.

Lydia was a trader and it is not recorded that she was married. Since she traded in purple (cloth or dye) we might consider that she was a wealthy woman. *Act 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul*. Wealthy maybe, but nonetheless faithful.

Her name, Lydia, it is an honour to her to have her name recorded here in the book of God, so that wherever the scriptures are read there shall this be told concerning her. Note, The names of the saints are precious with God, and should be so with us, we cannot have our names recorded in the Bible, but, if God open our hearts, we shall find them written in the book of life, and this is better (Phil. 4:3) and more to be rejoiced in, Lu. 10:20.

Here we learn a fundamental truth about evangelism. No matter how keen we are, or how well we speak to people, except the Lord open the door we labour in vain.

Psa 127:1 A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. This is the sovereignty of God in evangelism.

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Rom 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 1Co 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

If we truly understand this it should take some pressure off all of us in our task. Success is measured not in terms of converts, but of faithfulness in the allotted task. I suppose it is similar to work in research. We cannot guarantee results, we work towards certain goals and there are things that we would like to achieve, but it doesn't always work out. Life is like that in many other aspects. However, if in my work, I do a good job and apply myself to the task, I have played my part. I cannot guarantee results!

Lydia shows those wonderful traits of the Christian namely hospitality and kindness. *1Jn 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 1Jn 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*. It is one thing to consume hospitality, but it is another to give it, to have heart large enough to encompass others as well as yourself. God had not merely opened her heart to the gospel, He had kept it open for others also. *Rom 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality*.

Paul and Silas in Prison.

Act 16:16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: Act 16:17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. Act 16:18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. Act 16:19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, Act 16:20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, Act 16:21And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. Act 16:22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the

magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. Act 16:23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Act 16:24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

While there evangelising, Paul comes across a demon possessed slave. *Act 16:16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying*.

In mythology, python was a serpent who lived as a python and guarded the Delphic oracle. Delphin was considered the centre of the earth. A spot in the temple was marked by Omphalos stone. Delphin belonged originally to the earth goddess who was consulted in all matters. Apollo supposedly slew it, but the name applied then to people who prophesied under the inspiration of Apollo, Such people generally spoke with the mouth closed, uttering words beyond their own control. Because of this they were also called “engastrimythoi” or ventriloquists.

There are two observations I make here.

Paul does not act to exorcise the woman immediately. There are some in today’s church who are constantly on the lookout to cast out demons. Instant application without forethought applies to healing. It is almost a show. I observe in the New Testament that many of today’s practices are absent here. Special meetings for healing or exorcism are absent. The main task is educational and these gifts are exercised along the way, almost incidental as it were to the primary task. We don’t know the reason why he tolerated it, but he did and was in no hurry to cast out the demon.

The devil will often appear to be working with the faith*. Act 16:17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation*.

The article is left out and it might be rendered “a way of salvation”. We must always beware when that which we know is evil appears to patronise the truth of Christ. There was clearly nothing in common. It is like a person who is not a believer starting to adopt aspects of the Christian faith.

It is like casting pearls before swine. *Mat 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you*.

Notice here that as soon as satan's servant is cast out of the girl, he stirs up her masters to bring evil upon Paul and Silas. Always expect evil from unbelievers, because satan is working in their lives to destroy you. They may appear kind and friendly, but they are controlled by satan. *Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh,*

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone. This explains why Paul and Silas were treated so badly. The masters of the demon possessed girl cared nothing for the girl herself, only for their ability to exploit her demonic possession for money. They were occult "pimps," prostituting her spiritually.

They seized Paul and Silas. Paul and Silas were singled out not only because they were the leaders of the evangelistic group, but also by their appearance, as they were the most obviously Jewish. This is indicated by how they began their accusation: "These men, being Jews."

Luke was a Gentile, and Timothy was only half Jewish. Paul and Silas looked Jewish, and "Anti-Jewish sentiment lay very near the surface in pagan antiquity." (Bruce) The objection that these men were Jews is even more interesting knowing the Jewish community in Philippi was small.

When they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison. After being severely beaten, Paul and Silas were imprisoned in maximum-security conditions (commanding the jailer to keep them securely... the inner prison... fastened their feet in the stocks).

Jewish legal tradition gave a maximum number of blows that could be delivered when beating a person, but the Romans had no such limit. We simply know Paul and Silas were severely beaten. Paul later wrote of his life: *In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.* (2 Corinthians 11:23)

After such a bad beating, they were put in uncomfortable conditions (fastened their feet in the stocks). "These stocks had more than two holes for legs, which could thus be forced apart in a such a way as to cause the utmost discomfort and cramping pain." (Bruce)

Even in their pain, God was not far from Paul and Silas. Tertullian said, "The legs feel nothing in the stocks when the heart is in heaven."

The Philippian Jailer Converted.

Act 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. Act 16:26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. Act 16:27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. Act 16:28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Act 16:29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, Act 16:30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Act 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Act 16:32 And

they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. Act 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. Act 16:34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. Act 16:35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. Act 16:36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. Act 16:37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. Act 16:38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. Act 16:39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. Act 16:40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Paul and Silas

Act 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God, while the other prisoners listened.

What was going through the minds of these Apostles? I think that we can get some idea from their actions!

They were Afflicted. They were happy in affliction.

Jas 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

I think that Christians should be optimists, in all circumstances.

2Co 4:8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair. We have been warned that those who live Godly will suffer, when it happens, we can hardly complain since we have been warned.

2Ti 3:10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 2Ti 3:11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

I am not advocating a masochistic view of life, but we should develop an attitude and strength of mind to cope with adversity. We are to be good soldiers. *2Ti 2:3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*. In order that we are prepared, God has encouraged us to use the scripture and if we soak up this revelation we shall always be left with hope. *Rom 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*.

When problems get large, too large, it is often because we have lost sight of God, His might and His power. We need to look to God, hold His hand, after all He is our father. *Isa 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee*.

The prayer and praise was suddenly intercepted by an earthquake, a natural phenomenon, employed by the Lord, not for the sake of allowing an escape, as with Peter. *Act 16:24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Act 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. Act 16:26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. Act 16:27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. Act 16:28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*

This earthquake is part of God's plan to bring a family to Christ. Paul and Silas make no attempt to "do a runner". I wonder, though how many would have responded like Paul and Silas. I am sure that as soon as the chains fell off and the doors spun open, you would have bolted, self interest taking the lead. What then would have been the consequence? We could re-write the end of this chapter "The keeper of the prison, waking out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors open and the prisoners gone drew his sword and fell upon it". End of story.

Paul however did not interpret this providence as a sign to escape, because he stayed where he was. Often we look to interpret providence by self interest, he did not use Peter's escape as a precedent! What's in it for me? Here though is an example for us, he, Paul looked at an opportunity for someone else. What is in it for somebody other than myself? I know that there are some who would willingly undergo hardship if only it would bring people to Jesus. Paul has a commitment to others like you. *2Co 12:15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved*.

For many sinners, like this wretched jailor, it takes a catastrophe, a situation where they are bought to the edge of the grave before they see their real needs. We live lives of self interest, pursuit of careers, hobbies and vanities with little thought of that great inevitability, the grave. There is a place somewhere that will hold our remains (if the Lord doesn't come before). Death is pursuing all men. In this country 650,000 people die each year. For some it is too quick to prepare for, an accident. For others it is a drawn out process, sickness and disease, yet such is the stubbornness of sin, men still refuse to see their mortality. Prepare to meet your God. *Amo 4:12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*.

Why don't men face up to this fact of death? It is apparently, one of those things that people do not want to speak about. The great reality is last thing we want to face.

I do not know what his concept of salvation was. Perhaps he had seen the power of Paul and Silas before they were jailed. More than likely, he had been witnessed to. *Act 16:35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. Act 16:36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace*. Paul was not a man to waste opportunities.

Who can men turn to in desperate circumstances, is there something in your life that would encourage men to turn to you? Can they see a quality or power that would draw them to your company and pluck at your wisdom? Cultivate your Christianity. The jailor asks the right people the right question.

How well are we equipped to give answers to people? It is not simply knowing about God, it is trusting in God. I may know about parachutes, but it is another thing to put one on and jump.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus”

They didn’t let it rest there. Faith requires action, be baptised. I don’t want to dwell on household baptism. Some would suggest that there were infants in the house and they use this to justify infant baptism. *Act 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.* We don’t know the age profile of the household. We do however, know the faith profile. Belief was the criteria for salvation. If all were saved then all were capable of believing. They “all”, individually exercised a personal trust and commitment to Jesus.

They didn’t hang about for commitment classes! If you go with Jesus, go all of the way at His pace, not mans. Straight away, in the same hour of the night they obeyed not waiting for the daylight. They were not using it as some do, as an excuse to witness to men, more important that it was a witness to God. *1Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

How many have been deprived of this experience by men inserting their own little caveats in the process! Who is right?

In Mark’s gospel, you will find a racy account of the work of Jesus. The word “straightway” occurs many times, emphasising the pace of Christianity. It is no wonder that churches decline when they take God’s foot off the accelerator and put mans foot on the brakes.

Like Paul and Silas, we must learn to seize opportunities. Those outside of Christ must do the same, lest Jesus of Nazareth passes totally by.

Other instances of the same thing?

Act 16:37 But Paul told the police, "We are Roman citizens, and the Roman officials had us beaten in public without giving us a trial. They threw us into jail.

Now do they think they can secretly send us away? No, they cannot! They will have to come here themselves and let us out." Act 16:38 When the police told the officials that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, the officials were afraid.

Where was Timothy during all this?

Timothy, Paul's choice to accompany Silas and himself is not as robust as his teacher and mentor.

Act 16:1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Act 16:2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Act 16:3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

2Ti 1:6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. 2Ti 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.2Ti 1:8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.

Acts Chapter 17.

Personal Application

Paul and Silas in Thessalonica

Act 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: Act 17:2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Act 17:3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. Act 17:4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. Act 17:5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. Act 17:6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Act 17:7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. Act 17:8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. Act 17:9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

Paul and Silas in Berea

Act 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto

Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Act 17:12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. Act 17:13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. Act 17:14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. Act 17:15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

Let us endeavour to get some practical points from this ministry, some personal application. We have before us two synagogues. 1. Thessalonica (Salonika) and 2. Berea who are described as better bred.

At Thessalonica the gospel has a turbulent start and it must say something for their conversion experience that they did not readily give up. Paul writes to them reminding them of their beginnings and persecutions to come. See 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2.

One of the major issues that occupies Paul in both Epistles is the “coming of Christ”.

1Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

2Th 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2Th 2:2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. There was a clear expectation of the return of Jesus.

1 Tit 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

2Ti 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

What long term plans have you made and how do they fit in with the coming of Christ?

The Berean church showed a more ready spirit, a better disposition initially to the gospel. *Act 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*.

However they did not swallow everything they heard. They put things to the test! What test? Tradition, science, speculation, fable? No, it was scripture! Do you actually think through scripture, that is use it to filter the inputs into your mind? Do you let scripture correct the aberrations of knowledge?

The scriptures should become “spectacles” to correct our view of mankind and the world. Prove all things.

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Gal 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

How many of you go away and validate for themselves the things that you hear on a Sunday? If you pick up error, you can only blame yourself for blindly following, ask if you don’t understand. Develop this Berean spirit. Don’t be in such a rush to get on with this life that you fail to establish yourself in eternal life.

When did the Bereans do their study? It was daily. Where did they do it? I can only think that it was at the synagogue where the local scroll (Bible) was kept. Can you imagine that! Meeting every day!

However, they were forging their own weapons, rather than using someone else’s tools. Perhaps this is why there is no recorded letter to the Bereans. They got on with their Christianity and found their direction in what had been written.

The main thrust of Paul’s initial witness to the Jews concerned the death and resurrection of Jesus. *Act 17:2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Act 17:3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ*.

Why did it need proving to those who already had the scriptures? Was it not self evident as the Law of Moses? I think that it reflects the Messianic concept and national attitude of the Jews. *Joh 8:33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?* Was this true? Nationalistic delusions had clouded their vision.

There is also the other problem in interpreting Old Testament scripture. The prophetic imagery is fabricated from worldly pictures. E.g. the temple, the land and restoration.

Eze 40:2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.

Eze 41:1 Afterward he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle.

Eze 37:24 And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. Eze 37:25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Eze 37:26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

Eze 39:25 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; Eze 39:26 After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.

You see if you selectively look at the Old Testament it is possible to create a highly biased earthly perspective of Jewish history. In my view, this is the whole failure of Dispensationalism. And in case you forget we see that the New Testament views the Old Testament in a highly spiritual way.

Let me illustrate with the concept of “temple”. The temple is in heaven. Without doubt the concept of a temple is elevated to its highest and most pure form and nowhere in the New Testament is there a view of a future restoration of earthly symbols!

Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Joh 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? Joh 2:21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 1Co 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Revelation Chapter 21 mirrors Ezekiel Chapter 40*. Rev 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

Now, I have laboured the point that it is easy to be selective and biased a view of the Old Testament and I suggest this was the case with the Thessalonians. The Messianic expectation was almost for victory without suffering. Paul and Silas show that victory was through suffering and that apparent defeat offered a more powerful view to ultimate victory.

Hence there are two statements we must address.

1. Christ must suffer (implies death also).

2. That the Messiah (Christ) should rise from the dead.

You see only in suffering where death is conquered can you ever be the ultimate victor.

However, you prove these points! What does this tell you about your knowledge? What are you going to do about it and when?

Php 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; Php 3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

We see here that our “Apostle to the Gentiles” is still Synagogue surfing, is Paul still acting like a Jew? The Synagogue folk would have had some knowledge of Scripture affecting Pauls approach.

The house of Jason. Jason was a Christian in Thessalonica whose house seems to have been a centre for the church. When the evil men from the marketplace did not find Paul and Silas there, they attacked Jason himself, and some brethren who were with him.

A Jason is mentioned in Romans as a blood relative of Paul. I am not sure if this is the same one, but if so would explain why our friends were staying there.

Rom 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Rom 16:21 Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

Idolatry.

Paul in Athens

Act 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Act 17:17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Act 17:18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. Act 17:19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new

doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? Act 17:20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. Act 17:21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Act 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. Act 17:23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. Act 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Act 17:25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; Act 17:26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; Act 17:27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: Act 17:28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Act 17:29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. Act 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Act 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Act 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. Act 17:33 So Paul departed from among them. Act 17:34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

How do you view idolatry? Idolatry may take many forms from greed to role models. *Col 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*. The things in fact that take us away from Christ, the things that absorb our interest at the expense of Christ, it worried Paul, no that word isn't strong enough, rather it put him in a paroxysm, just as with Barnabas. *Act 15:38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work*. It is easy to let things pass, rather than confront, to join the herd rather than stand against it, but that puts us in the mould of Judas.

It spurred Paul on. Some of the philosophers, the wise men of the day confront Paul calling him a "babbler". The Greek may be a term of abuse for it means "seed gatherer" applying to small bird and in Athens they were "refuse collectors" or men of no account, loafers or gossips. So Paul is put somewhere between a no account bin man and a babbling bird. These men also accuse him (Paul) of teaching about strange gods.

Paul is not in the least discouraged by these people. Many of us might fade in the face of such concerted opposition. We might become silent Christians. Not Paul. Neither is he led to Mars Hill in a state of mental blank. He is always ready to seize an opportunity. On his way to the place where all of these philosophers gather, he sees a little pedestal or altar to a god, he will use that later in his speech.

I don't know how many of you who bodily go out to visit people look for "conversation openers", when you go to a house. Is there anything in the garden, through the window, in the hall that might tell you something about the people and form a starting point for your conversation? I think of all people, evangelists should be the most opportunistic of all men.

A chance remark can form the basis of a testimony.

Joh 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

2Ti 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

2Ti 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. This is the watchword of the evangelist, who is also ready at any time to go anywhere.

Philip is to be an example.

Act 8:39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Returning to Paul we find him in the middle of what today might be the "Oxford Union" debating society or the Royal society, surrounded by some of the cleverest minds of his day and age. It does not put him off in the least. He has an opportunity and he will use it.

His approach is interesting. He is in a similar situation to Elijah.

1Ki 18:17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? 1Ki 18:18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. 1Ki 18:19 Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

I see no difference between a prophet of Baal and a heathen philosopher, they both deny the true God. Like Elijah, Paul wants to establish the true God and displace the idols and false gods.

The difference lies in the approach. Elijah does it with a powerful sign, Paul does it with powerful words. *1Ki 18:24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken*. Why though with the precedent of Elijah doesn't Paul use a sign if an apostle? *2Co 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds*.

Certainly, there is a reason that the New Testament does not follow Old Testament practice. *Luk 9:54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? Luk 9:55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. Luk 9:56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village*.

It also pleases God to rebuke the wise of this world with the foolishness of preaching. *1Co 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 1Co 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*. Yet surely a sign would have added a measure of proof and authority to Paul's words? Whatever the reason, signs are not always used to prove the reality of God.

The altar to the unknown god could be transliterated, the agnostic altar. I would call it today "the altar of I have my beliefs". It is designed to fill in that great area of uncertainty and cover all other options about gods. It makes certain that "if there is a god" we have given him a slice of the action, even if we don't know what he is like.

Here we are confronted with "wise" men who clearly don't know everything. They are agnostic, that is ignorant of the nature of God. They are not saying "there is not God". *Psa 14:1 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good*.

They believe in a being above man but have no clear knowledge of Him. Clearly they don't like Paul's concept, because they reject the great proof namely the resurrection of Christ. Here perhaps is the greatest sign of all to sinful mankind. Perhaps lest he eclipse this by some other manifestation of power, Paul shows no miracles. He is content to let the work of Christ speak for itself.

I point out in passing that Paul has in this speech covered some of the major themes that we are often embroiled in.

1. Creation.
2. The nature of God.
3. The purpose of mankind.
4. Metaphysics.

5. True worship.
6. Judgement.
7. Christ.
8. Resurrection.
9. Repentance.
10. The Holy Spirit.
11. Assurance.
12. Righteousness.
13. Unity of mankind.

It is a masterpiece in its profound simplicity. Clearly inspired and it had an effect.

Why is Paul an effectual preacher? Back in Acts Chapter 4 verse 23 we see the infant church under pressure. It is in the firing line. They must have realised that it is one thing to utter words, it is another to see those words backed up by power. They already had boldness or confidence. *Act 28:31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.)* They had actually got to that stage! I know there are some here, adults and young who do not want that boldness, because it will have consequences in their life! But if you are at that stage, it is not unreasonable to ask the Lord to back up your boldness.

Act 4:29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, Act 4:30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. Act 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

We will do our part, please do yours. Paul knew this power in his life and it showed in his convictions.

Paul preaches the Gospel in the Athenian culture that has no knowledge of the God of Judaism

Note the Pauline filter here, the message is simple God will judge the world. To people with no knowledge of the Biblical past he gives a potted history of creation. They were full of philosophy and crazy ideas.

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The Epicureans and the Stoicks.

Act 17:18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

Epicureanism is a system of philosophy founded in 307 BCE and based upon the teachings of Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher. Epicurus was

an atomist and materialist, following in the steps of Democritus. His materialism led him to religious scepticism and a general attack on superstition and divine intervention. Epicureanism was originally a challenge to Platonism, and its main opponent later became Stoicism. It is a form of hedonism insofar as it declares pleasure to be its sole intrinsic goal. However, the concept that the absence of pain and fear constitutes the greatest pleasure, and its advocacy of a simple life, make it very different from hedonism as colloquially understood.

Stoicism is a school of Hellenistic philosophy that flourished in ancient Greece and Rome. The Stoics believed that the universe operated according to reason, *i.e.* by a God which is immersed in nature itself. Of all the schools of ancient philosophy, Stoicism made the greatest claim to being utterly systematic. The Stoics provided a unified account of the world, constructed from ideals of logic, monistic physics, and naturalistic ethics. These three ideals constitute virtue, which is necessary for 'living a well-reasoned life', seeing as they are all parts of a logos, or philosophical discourse, which includes the mind's rational dialogue with itself.

Stoicism was founded in the ancient Agora of Athens by Zeno of Citium around 300 BC, and flourished throughout the Greco-Roman world until the 3rd century AD, and among its adherents was Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Along with Aristotelian term logic, the system of propositional logic developed by the Stoics was one of the two great systems of logic in the classical world. It was largely built and shaped by Chrysippus, the third head of the Stoic school in the 3rd century BCE. Chrysippus's logic differed from term logic because it was based on the analysis of propositions rather than terms.

Stoicism experienced a decline after Christianity became the state religion in the 4th century AD. Since then, it has seen revivals, notably in the Renaissance (Neostoicism) and in the contemporary era.

It is interesting that these two opposed schools gang up together against Christianity.

The **Areopagus**.

Act 17:19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? Mars Hill, also known as the Areopagus, is a hill in Athens, Greece, famous for its historical and religious significance.

The Areopagus (/æriˈɒpəgəs/) is a prominent rock outcropping located northwest of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. Its English name is the Late Latin composite form of the Greek name Areios Pag**os**, translated "Hill of Ares" (Ancient Greek: Ἄρειος Πάγος). The name Areopagus also referred, in classical times, to the Athenian governing council, later restricted to the Athenian judicial council or court that tried cases of deliberate homicide, wounding, and religious matters, as well as cases involving arson of olive trees, because they convened in this location.

The war god Ares (Roman Mars) was supposed to have been tried by the other gods on the Areopagus for the murder of Poseidon's son Halirrhothius (a typical example of an aetiological myth).

Greek Gods

The Greeks had many gods and goddesses the main twelve are often referred to as the Greek pantheon, they were a collection of deities who played significant roles in Greek mythology and religion. Key figures include Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Hermes, and either Hestia or Dionysus. These twelve were known as the Twelve Olympians. There are more than 60.

Act 17:34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

What does areopagite mean?

Noun. a member of the Areopagus, a judicial council of ancient Athens that met on the hill of that name.

Among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite; a judge in the court of Areopagus, how many judges that court consisted of, is not certain, nor whether there was one who was superior to the rest, if there was such an one, Dionysius seems to have been he, since he is called the Areopagite. The business of this court was not only to try causes of murder, which seems to have been the original business of it, but by these judges the rights of the city were preserved and defended, war was proclaimed, and all law suits adjusted and decided, and they made it their business to look after idle and slothful persons, and inquire how they lived, they always heard and judged causes in the night, in the dark, because they would only know facts, and not persons, lest they should be influenced by their afflictions, and be led wrong, they were very famous in other nations for their wisdom and skill, and for their gravity and strict justice. Dolabella, proconsul of Asia, having a woman brought before him for poisoning her husband and son, which she confessed, and gave reasons for doing it, referred the matter to a council, who refused to pass sentence, upon which he sent the case to Athens, to the Areopagites, as to judges "more grave" and "more experienced", and hence these words of Julian the emperor,

"let an Areopagite be judge, and we will not be afraid of the judgment.''

This Dionysius the Areopagite is said, by another Dionysius, bishop of the Corinthians, a very ancient writer, to be the first bishop of the Athenians, which is more likely than that he should be a bishop in France. It is reported of him, that being at Heliopolis in Egypt, along with Apollophanes, a philosopher, at the time of Christ's sufferings, he should say concerning the unusual eclipse that then was, that "a God unknown, and clothed with flesh, suffered", on whose account the whole world was darkened, or, as, others affirm, he said, "either the God of nature suffers, or the frame of the world will be dissolved”.

It is also related of him that when he was converted by the apostle at Athens, he went to Clemens, bishop of Rome, and was sent by him with others into the west, to preach the Gospel, some of which went to Spain, and others to France, and that he steered his course to Paris, and there, with Rusticus and Eleutherius

his "colleagues", suffered martyrdom. The books ascribed unto him concerning the divine names, and ecclesiastical hierarchy, are spurious things, stuffed with foolish, absurd, and impious notions, and seem to have been written in the "fifth" century.

And a woman named Damaris, some of the ancients, and also some modern writers, take this woman to be the wife of Dionysius, but had she been his wife, she would have been doubtless called so, however, by the particular mention of her name, she seems to have been a person of some note and figure, the name is a diminutive from δαμαρ, Damar, which signifies a wife.

Thessalonians

Chronological Bible diverts to Thessalonians here.

Pauls stay at Thessalonica was brief and from here he went to Beria, then Athens and Corinth. From Athens Paul sent Timothy to encourage the Thessalonians and when Timothy returned to him at Corinth the Apostle was overjoyed at the news of the strong faith of the Thessalonians. From Corinth he wrote the first letter in late AD50. This is one of the earliest letters and one of the first New Testament letters written.

Thessalonica now called Salonika was an ancient Greek city, the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia.

Paul has not had enough time in Thessalonica to instruct his converts as thoroughly as he would have liked and in his letter expresses his joy at their steadfastness and encourages them in the midst of suffering and corrects misconceptions about the Lords return.

Acts Chapter 18.

Paul and his team are nearing the end of the second missionary journey and about to begin his third missionary journey.

In this chapter we have;

- Paul's coming to Corinth, his private conversations with Aquila and Priscilla, and his public reasonings with the Jews, from whom, when they rejected him, he turned to the Gentiles.
- The great success of his ministry there, and the encouragement Christ gave him in a vision to continue his labours there, in hopes of further success.
- The harassment he met with there from the Jews, which he got pretty well through by the coldness of Gallio, the Roman governor, in the cause.
- The progress Paul made through many countries, after he had continued long at Corinth, for the edifying and watering of the churches which he had founded and planted, in which circuit he made a short visit to Jerusalem.
- An account of Apollo's improvement in knowledge, and of his usefulness in the church.

Paul in Corinth

Act 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; Act 18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. Act 18:3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. Act 18:4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. Act 18:5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. Act 18:6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. Act 18:7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. Act 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Act 18:9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: Act 18:10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. Act 18:11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Act 18:12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Act 18:13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. Act 18:14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: Act 18:15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. Act 18:16 And he drave them from the judgment seat. Act 18:17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Paul is seen working for his living. Though he was bred a scholar, he was also master of a handicraft trade. He was a tent-maker, an upholsterer, he made tents for the use of soldiers and shepherds, of cloth or stuff, or (as some say tents were then generally made) of leather or skins, as the outer covering of the tabernacle. Hence to live in tents was to live sub pellibus, under skins.

Dr. Lightfoot shows that it was the custom of the Jews to bring up their children to some trade, even though they gave them learning or estates. Rabbi Judah says, "He that teaches not his son a trade is as if he taught him to be a thief." And another says, "He that has a trade in his hand is as a vineyard that is fenced."

An honest trade, by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon by any with contempt. Paul, though a Pharisee, and bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, having in his youth learned to make tents, did not by disuse lose this art.

Though he was perhaps entitled to a donation from the churches he had planted, and from the people to whom he preached, he still worked at his calling to get bread, which is more to his praise who did not ask for supplies than to theirs who did not supply him unasked, knowing what straits he was reduced to.

See how humble Paul was, and wonder that so great a man could stoop so low, but he had learned condescension of his Master, who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. See how industrious he was, and how willing to take pains. He that had so much excellent work to do with his mind, when there was occasion, did not think it below him to work with his hands. Even those that are redeemed from the curse of the law are not exempt from that sentence, in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.

See how careful Paul was to recommend his ministry, and to prevent prejudices against it, even the most unjust and unreasonable, he therefore maintained himself with his own labour that he might not make the gospel of Christ burdensome. Though we may suppose he was master of his trade, yet he did not disdain to work at journey-work. Poor tradesmen must be thankful if their callings bring them in an income for themselves and their families, though they cannot do as the rich merchants that raise estates by their callings.

Though he was himself a great apostle, he chose to work with Aquila and Priscilla, because he found them to be very intelligent in the things of God, as appears afterwards, and he declares that they had been his helpers in Christ Jesus, Rom. 16:3.

This is an example to those who are going into service to seek for those services in which they may have the best help for their souls. Choose to work with those that are likely to be helpers in Christ Jesus. It is good to be in company and to have conversation with those that will further us in the knowledge of Christ, and to put ourselves under the influence of such as are determined that they will serve the Lord.

Concerning this Aquila we are told,

That he was a Jew, but born in Pontus. Many of the Jews of the dispersion were seated in that country. *1 Pe 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*

That he was lately come from Italy to Corinth. It seems he often changed his location. The reason for leaving Italy was because by a late edict of the emperor Claudius Caesar, all Jews were banished from Rome, for the Jews were generally hated, and every occasion was taken to put hardship and disgrace upon them. God's heritage was as a *speckled bird, the birds round about were against her,* Jer. 12:9.

Aquila, though a Christian, was banished because he had been a Jew; and the Gentiles had such confused notions that they could not distinguish between a Jew and a Christian. Suetonius, in the life of Claudius, speaks of this decree in the ninth year of his reign, and says, The reason was because the Jews were a turbulent people—assiduo tumultuantes*,* and that it was impulsore Christo—upon the account of Christ*,* some zealous for him, others bitter against him, which occasioned great emotion, such as gave umbrage to the government, and provoked the emperor, who was a timorous jealous man, to order them all to be gone. If Jews persecute Christians, it is not strange if heathens persecute them both.

We see Paul preaching to the Jews, and dealing with them to bring them to the faith of Christ, both the native Jews and the Greeks*,* that is, those that were more or less proselyted to the Jewish religion, and frequented their meetings.

He reasoned with them in the synagogue publicly every Sabbath*.* See how the apostles propagated the gospel, not by force and violence, by fire and sword, not by demanding an implicit consent, but by fair arguing, they drew with the cords of a man, gave a reason for what they said, and gave a liberty to object against it, having satisfactory answers ready. God invites us to come and reason with him (Isa. 1:18), and challenges sinners to produce their cause, and bring forth their strong reasons*,* Isa. 41:21. Paul was a rational as well as a scriptural preacher.

He persuaded them, epeithe. It denotes the urgency of his preaching. He did not only dispute argumentatively with them, but he followed his arguments with affectionate persuasions, begging of them for God's sake, for their own soul's sake, for their children's sake, not to refuse the offer of salvation made to them. He persuaded them, that is, he prevailed with them, so some understand it. In sententiam suam adducebat—He brought them over to his own opinion*.* Some of them were convinced by his reasonings, and yielded to Christ.

He was even more earnest in this matter when his fellow-labourers, his deputies, joined with him. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia*,* and had brought him good tidings from the churches there, and were ready to assist him

here, and strengthened his hands, then Paul was more than before pressed in spirit, which made him more than ever pressing in his preaching. He was grieved for the obstinacy and infidelity of his countrymen the Jews, was more intent than ever upon their conversion, and the love of Christ constrained him to it (2 Co. 5:14): it is the word that is used here, it pressed him in spirit to it, it compelled him. And, being thus pressed, he testified to the Jews with all possible solemnity and seriousness, as that which he was perfectly well assured of himself, and attested to them as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them.

We then see him abandoning the unbelieving Jews, and turning from them to the Gentiles, as he had done in other places.

Many of the Jews, persisted in their contradiction to the gospel of Christ, and would not yield to the strongest reasonings nor the most winning persuasions, they opposed themselves and blasphemed, they set themselves in battle array (so the word signifies) against the gospel, they joined hand in hand to stop the progress of it. They resolved they would not believe it themselves, and would do all they could to keep others from believing it. They could not argue against it, but what was wanting in reason they made up in ill language, they blasphemed, spoke reproachfully of Christ, and in Him of God Himself, as Rev. 13:5, 6. To justify their infidelity, they broke out into downright blasphemy.

Paul then declared himself done with them, and left them to perish in their unbelief. He was pressed in spirit to testify to them, but when they opposed that testimony, and persisted in their opposition, was pressed in spirit to testify against them, and his zeal he showed by a sign, he shook his raiment, shaking off the dust from it (as before they shook off the dust from their feet, ch. 13:51), for a testimony against them, thus he cleared himself from them, but threatened the judgments of God against them. As Pilate by washing his hands signified the devolving of the guilt of Christ's blood from himself upon the Jews, so Paul by shaking his raiment signified what he said, if possible to affect them with it.

He had done his part, and was clean from the blood of their souls, he had, like a faithful watchman, given them warning, and thereby had delivered his soul, though he could not prevail to deliver theirs. He had tried all methods to work upon them, but all in vain, so that if they perish in their unbelief their blood is not to be required at his hands, here he plainly refers to Ezekiel. *Eze 33:8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Eze 33:9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*

They would certainly perish if they persisted in their unbelief, and the blame would lie wholly upon themselves: "Your blood be upon your own heads, you will be your own destroyers, your nation will be ruined in this world, and particular persons will be ruined in the other world, and you alone shall bear it." If anything

would frighten them at last into a compliance with the gospel, surely this would.

Having given them over, he does not give over his work. Though Israel be not gathered, Christ and his gospel shall be glorious, Henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles, and the Jews cannot complain, for they had the first offer, and a fair one, made to them.

The guests that were first invited will not come, and the provision must not be lost, guests must be had therefore from the highways and the hedges. "We would have gathered the Jews (Mt. 23:37), would have healed them (Jer. 51:9), and they would not, but Christ must not be a head without a body, nor a foundation without a building, and therefore, if they will not, we must try whether others will." Thus the fall and diminishing of the Jews became the riches of the Gentiles, and Paul said this to their faces, not only because it was what he could justify, but to provoke them to jealousy.

Rom 11:12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? Rom 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: Rom 11:14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

We are told that Paul changed his quarters. Christ directed His disciples, when He sent them forth, not to go from house to house (Lu. 10:7), but there might be occasion to do it, as Paul did here. He departed out of the synagogue, being driven out by the perverseness of the unbelieving Jews, and he entered into a certain man's house, named Justus.

It should seem he went to this man's house, not to lodge, for he continued with Aquila and Priscilla, but to preach. When the Jews would not let him go on peaceably with his work in their meeting, this honest man opened his doors to him, and told him he should be welcome to preach there, and Paul accepted the proposal. It was not the first time that God's ark had taken up its lodging in a private house.

When Paul could not have liberty to preach in the synagogue, he preached in a house, without any disparagement to his doctrine. But observe the account of this man Justus and his house.

The man was next door to a synagogue and he was one that worshipped God, he was not an idolater, though he was a Gentile, but was a worshipper of the God of Israel, and him only, as was Cornelius. So that Paul might give the less offence to the Jews, though he had abandoned them, he set up his meeting in this man's house. Even when he was under a necessity of breaking off from them to turn to the Gentiles, he would study to oblige them.

The house was next door to the synagogue, it joined close to it, which some perhaps might interpret as done with design to draw people from the synagogue to the meeting; but I rather think it was done in charity, to show that he would come as near to them as he could, and was ready to return to them if they were but willing to receive his message, and would not contradict and blaspheme as

they had done.

Let's look at where we are. Corinth was a major city of the Roman Empire, at an important crossroads of trade and travel. Corinth was a commercial and naval rival of Athens. It was also a city notorious for its hedonism and immorality.

In Paul's day, Corinth was already an ancient city. It was a commercial centre with two harbours and had long been a rival to its northern neighbour, Athens. Corinth was a city with a remarkable reputation for loose living and especially sexual immorality. In classical Greek, to act like a Corinthian meant to practice fornication, and a Corinthian companion meant a prostitute.

This sexual immorality was permitted under the widely popular worship of Aphrodite (also known as Venus, the goddess of fertility and sexuality). In 146 B.C. Corinth rebelled against Rome and was brutally destroyed by Roman armies. It lay in ruins for a century, until Julius Caesar rebuilt the city. It quickly re-established its former position as a centre for both trade and immorality of every sort. One ancient writer described Corinth as a town where "none but the tough could survive." (Williams)

"It is significant that it was from this city that Paul wrote his Roman letter, and when one reads his description of Gentile corruption in that Roman letter, one has almost certainly a mirror of what he found in Corinth. (Romans 1:22-32)" (Morgan)

Paul knew that because people from all over the Empire passed through Corinth, a strong church there could touch lives all over the Empire. He knew Corinth was a tough city, but he wasn't only interested in planting churches where he thought it was *easy*.

They opposed him and blasphemed. The blasphemy must have been directed against Jesus, because Paul preached Jesus as the Messiah (*testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ*, Acts 18:5). This is an indirect declaration of the deity of Jesus, because someone can only really blaspheme God.

From now on I will go to the Gentiles. Paul strongly sensed his responsibility to preach to the Jews first, but when his message was rejected, he wasted no time in going to the Gentiles. *Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Paul fulfilled the spirit of what Jesus said in Matthew 7:6: *Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces*. When people are determined to reject the gospel, we shouldn't keep trying with them until the door is open again.

He shook his garments, Paul did this so that not a speck of dust from the synagogue would remain on his clothes, much less his sandals. This was a dramatic way of expressing his rejection of their rejection. Paul was certainly capable of dramatic and vivid demonstrations of his message.

Let us look at the characters.

Priscilla and Aquila.

And he found a certain Jew named Aquila…with his wife Priscilla …and he came to them. It is implied, though not clearly stated, that Aquila and Priscilla were at this time Christians. But it is possible that Paul led them both to Jesus as they worked together as tentmakers (those who worked with leather).

This began one of the important friendships of the New Testament, Paul and Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Paul called them his fellow workers who had risked their own necks for my life (Romans 16:3-4).

“Priscilla is a diminutive form of Prisca, which is one of the great families of Rome. She was probably related to this family in some way.” (Hughes). In half the mentions of this New Testament married couple, Priscilla’s name is written first, which is said to be unusual and perhaps a sign of high rank.

They were tentmakers. Paul’s tent making was an important part of his ministry, he voluntarily supported himself in his missionary and preaching work so that no one could accuse him of seeking converts for the sake of enriching himself (1 Corinthians 9:15-18). In the modern missions’ movement, people call any work that a missionary does to support himself on the mission field tent making.

“In Judaism it was not considered proper for a scribe or a rabbi to receive payment for his teaching, so many of them practised a trade in addition to their study and teaching of the law.” (Bruce)

We are told why this couple are in Corinth, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. The Roman historian Suetonius wrote that Claudius banished Jews from Rome because they were “indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus.” There have been many attempts to explain who Chrestus was, but a likely solution is that Suetonius referred to Jesus Christ, but writing some 70 years after the events, had the name somewhat mixed up. It seems that the expulsion had to do with “dissension and disorder within the Jewish community of Rome resulting from the introduction of Christianity into one or more of the synagogues of the city.” (Bruce)

Chronology is often a tricky matter, but it seems that this expulsion of Jews from Rome occurred at about A.D. 49.

Crispus.

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. This shows that Paul treated the Jews of Corinth with love and grace even after they rejected him and his message. He certainly did not forbid Jewish people from coming to Jesus, he merely switched the focus of his evangelism from the Jews to the Gentiles.

Crispus was one of the few in Corinth whom Paul personally baptized. *1Co 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;*

Gallio.

When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, in approaching Gallio, the Jews of Corinth tried to stop Paul's preaching work in the entire province.

"If Gallio had accepted the Jewish charge and found Paul guilty of the alleged offense, provincial governors everywhere would have had a precedent, and Paul's ministry would have been severely restricted. As it was, Gallio's refusal to act in the matter was tantamount to the recognition of Christianity as a *religio licita*" (Longenecker).

Before Paul could defend himself, Gallio did it for him. He correctly saw that the government has no role in attempting to decide religious matters, though government does have a legitimate role in matters of wrongdoing or wicked crimes**.**

Gallio looked the other way when angry Gentiles beat Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue. Probably, both the crowd and Gallio himself were more against the Jews than they were for Paul.

"It was his duty to let this good man alone, but it was not his duty to allow the Gentiles, on the other hand, to begin beating the Jews." (Spurgeon)

Apparently, when Crispus trusted in Jesus, he was replaced as ruler of the synagogue by Sosthenes, who later himself seems to have become a Christian.

Act 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

Act 18:17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

1Co 1:1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

Gallio, upon the first hearing, or rather without any hearing at all, dismisses the cause, and will not take any notice of it. Paul was going about to make his defence, and to show that he did not teach men to worship God contrary to the law, but the judge, being resolved not to pass any sentence upon this cause, would not give himself the trouble of examining it.

Gallio shows himself very ready to do the part of a judge in any matter that it was proper for him to take notice of. He said to the Jews, that were the prosecutors, "If it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, if you could charge the prisoner with theft or fraud, with murder or any act of immorality, I should think myself bound to bear with you in your complaints, though they were clamorous and noisy;" for the rudeness of the petitioners was no good reason, if their cause was just, why they should not have justice done them. It is the duty of magistrates to right the injured, and to pass judgement upon the injured, and, if the complaint is not made with all the decorum that might be, they should still hear it out.

But, he will by no means allow them to make a complaint to him of a thing that was not within his jurisdiction. ‘If it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look you to it, sort it out among yourselves, but I will be no judge of such matters, you shall neither burden my patience with the hearing of it, nor burden my conscience with giving judgment upon it;" and therefore, when they were urgent and pressing to be heard, he drove them from the judgment-seat, and ordered another cause to be called.

There was something right in Gallio's conduct, and praise-worthy that he would not pretend to judge things he did not understand and that he left the Jews to themselves in matters relating to their own religion, but would not let them, under pretence of that, run down Paul, and abuse him, or, at least, would not himself be the tool of their malice, to give judgment against him. He looked upon the matter to be not within his jurisdiction, and therefore would not meddle in it.

But it was certainly wrong to speak so slightly of a law and religion which he might have known to be of God, and with which he ought to have acquainted himself. In what way God is to be worshipped, whether Jesus be the Messiah, whether the gospel be a divine revelation, were not questions of words and names, as he scornfully and profanely called them. They are questions of vast importance, and in which, if he had understood them himself, he would have been concerned. He speaks as if he boasted of his ignorance of the scriptures, and took a pride in it, as if it were below him to take notice of the law of God, or make any enquiries concerning it.

The abuse done to Sosthenes, and Gallio's unconcernedness in it screams out here. The parties put a great contempt upon the court, when they took Sosthenes and beat him before the judgment-seat. Missing information prompts a lot of assumptions here concerning this matter, because it is uncertain who this Sosthenes was, and who the Greeks were that abused him. It seems most probable that Sosthenes was a Christian, and Paul's particular friend, that appeared for him on this occasion, and probably had taken care of his safety, and conveyed him away, when Gallio dismissed the cause, so that, when they could not light on Paul, they fell foul on him who protected him.

It is certain that there was one Sosthenes that was a friend of Paul, and well known at Corinth, it is likely he was a minister, for Paul calls him his brother, and joins him with himself in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, as he does Timothy in his second, and it is probable that this was he, he is said to be a ruler of the synagogue, either joint-ruler with Crispus, or a ruler of one synagogue, as Crispus was of another. As for the Greeks that abused him, it is very probable that they were either Hellenist Jews, or Jewish Greeks, those that joined with the Jews in opposing the gospel, and that the native Jews put them up to do it, thinking it would be less offensive.

They were so enraged against Paul that they beat Sosthenes before the judgment-seat, and so enraged against Gallio, because he would not

countenance the prosecution, if he would not be their executioner, they would be their own judges.

The court put no less contempt upon the cause, and the persons too. But Gallio cared for none of these things. If by this be meant that he cared not for the affronts of bad men, it was commendable. While he steadily adhered to the laws and rules of equity, he might despise their contempt, but, if it be meant (as I think it is) that he concerned not himself for the abuses done to good men, it carries his indifference too far, and gives us but an ill character of him. Here is wickedness done in the place of judgment (which Solomon complains of, Eccl. 3:16), and nothing done to discountenance and suppress it.

Gallio, as a judge, ought to have protected Sosthenes, and restrained and punished the Greeks that assaulted him. A man to be mobbed in the street or in the market, perhaps, may not be easily helped, but to be so in his court, the judgment-seat, with the court sitting and not be concerned at it, is an evidence that truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter; for he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey, Isa. 59:14, 15. Those that see and hear of the sufferings of God's people, and have no sympathy with them, nor concern for them, do not pity and pray for them, it being no worry to them whether the interests of religion sink or swim, are of the spirit of Gallio here, who, when a good man was abused before his face, cared for none of these things, like those that were at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos 6:6), like the king and Haman, that sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed, Esth. 3:15.

Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

The implication behind this message was that Paul *was* afraid, fearing that here in Corinth his work would be cut short by either opposing Jews (as in Thessalonica and Berea) or by the highly-charged worldliness around him.

“There had been culture shock in Athens, and now Paul experienced moral shock in Corinth. Its sweat and perfume and grit smothered Paul’s righteous soul, and he became depressed.” (Hughes)

The solution to Paul’s fear was for him to obey Jesus’ command to not be afraid, and to speak and not keep silent, that is, to keep getting the Word of God out.

Jesus didn’t tell Paul that his opponents wouldn’t try to stop him, only that they would not be successful (no one will attack you to hurt you). For I am with you. This promise was the basis for God’s command to not be afraid and to keep preaching. When we understand what this means, and who says it, this is enough.

Spurgeon considered the promise of Jesus, “For I am with you.” He thought it emphasized three things: The presence of Jesus, the sympathy of Jesus, and the cooperation of Jesus.

For I have many people in this city. This additional promise was a constant assurance to Paul, who must have often had doubts about the survival and health of the Corinthian church.

Paul Returns to Antioch.

Act 18:18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. Act 18:19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. Act 18:20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; Act 18:21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. Act 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. Act 18:23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Paul remained a good while, unlike previous cities, Paul wasn't forced out of Corinth. He stayed there a good while or 18 months.

Paul developed such a deep friendship and partnership with Priscilla and Aquila that they decided to go with him as he headed east, back to Jerusalem and then Antioch.

He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow, we are not given details but the vow was possibly the vow of a Nazirite. *Num 6:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD:* Usually this vow was taken for a certain period of time and when completed, the hair (which had been allowed to freely grow) was cut off and offered to the Lord at a special ceremony at the temple in Jerusalem

And at last he comes to Ephesus. Paul had wanted to preach in Ephesus some two years earlier, but was prevented by the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6). Now, the Holy Spirit gave him the liberty to preach in this important city, and great results were seen.

God has a special timing for everything in our lives. If Paul could have discerned it, the Holy Spirit was really saying, "wait" when he wanted to go to Ephesus, instead of "no." Sometimes God says, "wait" and He always knows what He's doing when He says it.

Aquila and Priscilla stayed at Ephesus, seemingly at Paul's request. Something good started at Ephesus, and Paul wanted the work to continue with his trusted friends.

They asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent, but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem**"**. Paul could not stay long in Ephesus, perhaps wanting to present the

offering of his Nazarite vow in Jerusalem at an upcoming feast. We are not told exactly what feast this was.

Apollos Speaks Boldly in Ephesus

Act 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Act 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Act 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: Act 18:28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Paul continues his travels, and goes via Antioch to meet Apollos at Ephesus, and to give us some account of him, which becomes necessary to our understanding some passages in Paul's epistles.

We have an account of his character, when he came to Ephesus.

He was a Jew, born at Alexandria in Egypt, but of Jewish parents, for there were an abundance of Jews in that city, since the dispersion of the people, as it was foretold (Deu. 28:68): The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again. His name was not Apollo, the name of one of the heathen gods, but Apollos.

He was a man of good standing, and well fitted for public service. He was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures of the Old Testament, in the knowledge of which he was, as a Jew, brought up.

He had a great command of language, he was an eloquent man, he was aneµr logios, *a* prudent man, a learned man, he was one that could speak well, so it properly signifies; he was an oracle of a man, he was famous for speaking pertinently and closely, fully and fluently, upon any subject.

He had a great command of scripture-language, and this was the eloquence he was remarkable for. He came to Ephesus, being mighty in the scriptures, so the words are placed, having an excellent faculty of expounding scripture, he came to Ephesus, which was a public place, to trade with that talent, for the honour of God and the good of many.

He was not only ready in the scriptures, able to quote texts off-hand, and repeat them, and tell you where to find them (many of the carnal Jews were so, who were therefore said to have the form of knowledge, and the letter of the law), but he was mighty in the scriptures.

He understood the sense and meaning of them, he knew how to make use of them and to apply them, how to reason out of the scriptures, and to reason strongly, a convincing, commanding, confirming power went along with all his expositions and applications of the scripture. It is probable he had given proof of his knowledge of the scriptures, and his abilities in them, in many synagogues of the Jews.

He was instructed in the way of the Lord, that is, he had some acquaintance with the doctrine of Christ, had obtained some general notions of the gospel and the principles of Christianity, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Prophet that should come into the world, the first notice of this would be readily embraced by one that was so mighty in the scripture as Apollos was, and therefore understood the signs of the times. He was instructed, kateμcheμmenos—he was catechised (so the word is), either by his parents or by ministers, he was taught something of Christ and the way of salvation by Him.

Those that are to teach others must first be themselves taught the word of the Lord, not only to talk of it, but to walk in it. It is not enough to have our tongues tuned to the word of the Lord, but we must have our feet directed into the way of the Lord.

Apollos knew only the baptism of John, he was instructed in the gospel of Christ as far as John's ministry would carry him, and no further, he knew the preparing of the way of the Lord by that voice crying in the wilderness, rather than the way of the Lord itself. We cannot but think he had heard of Christ's death and resurrection, but he was not let into the mystery of them, had not had opportunity of conversing with any of the apostles since the pouring out of the Spirit, or he had himself been baptized only with the baptism of John, but was not baptized with the Holy Ghost, as the disciples were at the day of Pentecost.

I love the glimpse here of the powerful legacy of John the Baptist. It had travelled to the far end of Egypt. Apollos is also having his own ministry journey spreading the word. Paul and team were only one of many with this task.

Apollos came thither, seeking opportunities of doing and getting good, and he found both.

He made a very good use of his gifts in public. He came, probably, recommended to the synagogue of the Jews as a fit man to be a teacher there, and according to the light he had, and the measure of the gift given to him. Being fervent in the Spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord. Though he had not the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as the apostles had, he made use of the gifts he had for the dispensation of the Spirit, whatever the measure of it is, is given to every man to profit withal. And our Saviour, by a parable, designed to teach his ministers that though they had but one talent they must not bury that.

We have seen how Apollos was qualified with a good head and a good tongue, he had laid in a good stock of useful knowledge, and had an excellent faculty of communicating it.

Let us now see what he had further to recommend him as a preacher.

He was a lively preacher, as he had a good head, so he had a good heart, he was fervent in Spirit. He had in him a great deal of Divine fire as well as Divine light, was burning as well as shining. He was full of zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of precious souls. This appeared both in his forwardness to preach when he was called to it by the rulers of the synagogue, and in his fervency in his preaching. He preached as one in earnest, and who had had his heart in his work. Many are fervent in spirit, but are weak in knowledge, in scripture-knowledge, have far to seek for proper words and are full of improper ones and, on the other hand, many are eloquent enough, and mighty in the scriptures, and learned, and judicious, but they have no life or fervency.

Here was a complete man of God, thoroughly furnished for his work, both eloquent and fervent, full both of Divine knowledge and of Divine affections.

He was an industrious laborious preacher. He spoke and taught diligently. He took pains in his preaching, what he delivered was complete and he did not offer that to God, or to the synagogue, that either cost nothing or cost him nothing. He first worked it upon his own heart, and then laboured to impress it on those he preached to, he taught diligently, akriboµs, accurately, exactly; everything he said was well considered.

He was an evangelical preacher. Though he knew only the baptism of John, yet that was the beginning of the gospel of Christ, and to that he kept close, for he taught the things of the Lord, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the things that tended to make way for Him, and to set Him up.

The things pertaining to the kingdom of the Messiah were the subjects he chose to speak on, not the things of the ceremonial law, though those would be pleasing to his Jewish auditors, not the things of the Gentile philosophy, though he could have discoursed very well on those things, but the things of the Lord.

He was a courageous preacher, he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, as one who, having put confidence in God, did not fear the face of man, he spoke as one that knew the truth of what he said, and had no doubt of it, and that knew the worth of what he said and was not afraid to suffer for it, in the synagogue, where the Jews not only were present, but had power, there he preached the things of God, which he knew they were prejudiced against.

He also made a good increase of his gifts in private, he was not just a teacher, he was a student, in conversation with Aquila and Priscilla. If Paul or some other apostle or evangelist had been at Ephesus, he would have instructed him, but, for want of better help, Aquila and Priscilla (who were tent-makers) expounded to him the way of God more perfectly.

Aquila and Priscilla heard him preach in the synagogue. Though in knowledge he was much inferior to them, yet, having excellent gifts for public service, they encouraged his ministry, by a diligent and constant attendance upon it. Thus young ministers, that are hopeful, should be encouraged by grown Christians, for it becomes them to fulfil all righteousness.

Finding him defective in his knowledge of Christianity, they took him to them, to lodge in the same house with them, and expounded to him the way of God, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, more perfectly.

They did not use what they observed of his deficiency either to despise him themselves, or to disparage him to others, did not call him a young raw preacher, not fit to come into a pulpit, but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under, as knowing only the baptism of John, and, having themselves got great knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long intimate conversations with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him, and gave him a clear, distinct, and methodical account of those things which before he had but confused notions of.

See here an instance of that which Christ has promised, that to him that hath shall be given, he that has, and uses what he has, shall have more. He that diligently traded with the talent he had doubled it quickly.

See an instance of truly Christian charity in Aquila and Priscilla, they did good according to their ability. Aquila, though a man of great knowledge, yet did not undertake to speak in the synagogue, because he had not such gifts for public work as Apollos had, but he furnished Apollos with matter, and then left him to clothe it with acceptable words.

See an instance of great humility in Apollos. He was a very bright young man, of great parts and learning, newly come from the university, a popular preacher, and one mightily respected and followed, and yet, finding that Aquila and Priscilla were judicious serious Christians, that could speak intelligently of the things of God, though they were but mechanics, tent-makers, he was glad to receive instructions from them, to be shown by them his defects and mistakes, and to have his mistakes rectified by them, and his deficiencies made up.

Young scholars may gain a great deal by conversation with old Christians, as young students in the law may by old practitioners. Apollos, though he was instructed in the way of the Lord, did not rest in the knowledge he had attained, nor thought he understood Christianity as well as any man (which proud conceited young men are apt to do), but was willing to have it expounded to him more perfectly.

Those that know much should covet to know more, and what they know to know it better, pressing forward towards perfection.

Here is an instance of a good woman, though not permitted to speak in the church or in the synagogue, yet doing good with the knowledge God had given her in private converse.

Apollos works in the service of the church of Corinth, which was a larger sphere of usefulness than Ephesus at present was. Paul had set wheels going in Achaia and particularly at Corinth, the county-town. Many were stirred up by his preaching to receive the gospel, and they needed to be confirmed, and many were likewise irritated to oppose the gospel, and they needed to be corrected.

Paul was gone, was called away to other work, and now there was a vacancy for Apollos to step in, who was fitted rather to water than to plant, to build up those that were within than to bring in those that were without.

Apollos' call to this service was not by a vision, as Paul was called to Macedonia, nor so much as by the invitation of those he was to go to. He himself inclined to go, he was disposed to pass into Achai, having heard of the state of the churches there, he had a mind to try and see what good he could do among them. Though there were those there who were eminent for spiritual gifts, yet Apollos thought there might be some work for him, and God disposed his mind that way.

His friends encouraged him to go, and approved of his purpose and, he being a perfect stranger there, gave him a testimonial or letters of recommendation, exhorting the disciples in Achaia to entertain him and employ him. Though those at Ephesus had a great loss of his labours, they did not grudge those in Achaia the benefit of them, but, on the contrary, used their interest in them to introduce him, for the churches of Christ, though they are many, yet they are one.

His success in this service, which answered his intention and expectation, because believers were greatly edified, and those that had received the gospel were very much confirmed. He helped those much who had believed through grace. Those who believe in Christ, it is through grace that they believe, it is not of themselves, it is God's gift to them, it is His work in them.

Those who through grace do believe, still have need of help, as long as they are here in this world there are remainders of unbelief, and something lacking in their faith to be perfected, and the work of faith to be fulfilled.

Faithful ministers are capable of being in many ways helpful to those who through grace do believe, and it is their business to help them and, when a divine power goes along with them, they will be helpful to them.

Unbelievers were greatly mortified. Their objections were fully answered, the folly and sophistry of their arguments were discovered, so that they had nothing to say in defence of the opposition they made to the gospel, their mouths were stopped, and their faces filled with shame. Apollos mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, before the people, he did it earnestly, and with a great deal of vehemence, he took pains to do it, his heart was in it, as one that was truly desirous both to serve the cause of Christ and to save the souls of men.

He did it effectually. The case was so plain, and the arguments were so strong on Christ's side, that it was an easy matter to baffle all that the Jews could say against it. Though they were so fierce, yet their cause was so weak that he made

nothing of their opposition. Now that which he aimed to convince them of was that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the Messiah promised to the fathers, who should come, and they were to look for not other. If the Jews were but convinced of this, that Jesus is Christ, even their own law would teach them to hear Him.

The way he took to convince them was by the scriptures, this was the source of his arguments, for the Jews owned the scriptures to be of Divine authority, and it was easy for him, who was mighty in the scriptures, from them to show that Jesus is the Christ.

Providence

Act 18:22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. Act 18:23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. Act 18:24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. Act 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Act 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. Act 18:27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: Act 18:28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

How many of us view exile, displacement, losing our home and becoming a refugee from our own land as a blessing? How can all things work together for good? *Rom 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*. Now it doesn't say all things that happen are good, in fact there are some very sad and awful things that happen to people. It is the end product of the "working together" (lit synergism) that is good. Take a simple compound salt (NaCl) that is of great benefit to man. It is composed of two deadly elements chlorine and sodium that require very special handling, but together they work for good.

Priscilla and Aquila were exiled Jews from Rome, not a happy state to start with, but a blessing in the long run because they come to Christ and under the instruction of Paul. *Act 18:2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla. (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.*

For Paul it is a blessing, because they share a common trade and this probably forged the initial relationship. *Act 18:3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers*.

An additional glimpse of providence is seen in the attitude of the proconsul Gallio, an extremely astute man. Rulers in general are “not a terror” to good works. *Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.* It is also a very good illustration of avoiding getting dragged into arguments that don’t concern us. So often we allow ourselves to be pulled in to resolve disputes that should be settled by the individuals concerned. He also takes action that warns them not to trifle with his time.

Acts Chapter 19

Paul in Ephesus

Act 19:1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, Act 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Act 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Act 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. Act 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Act 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. Act 19:7 And all the men were about twelve. Act 19:8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. Act 19:9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. Act 19:10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. Paul was last in Ephesus on his way back from Corinth on his second missionary journey. Now he came from the east, arriving in Ephesus from the region of Phrygia. He came back to Ephesus as he had promised in Acts 18:21.

Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed he asks? Apparently there was something about these disciples that prompted this question from Paul. We don’t have any indication that it was his custom to ask people if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed.

They reply we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. By their reply, these Ephesian disciples showed they didn’t know much about God’s nature as revealed in Jesus. They knew enough to be saved and to be students of Jesus (they were called disciples), but they didn’t know much about all Jesus did for us, especially in His promise to send the Holy Spirit when He ascended to heaven.

Paul distinguishes between the baptism of John and baptism in the name of the Jesus. *And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."*

Into John's baptism.
These Ephesian disciples had only a basic understanding of the Messiah Jesus and His ministry, only what could be gained through the message of John the Baptist. They were in the same place as Apollos before Aquila and Priscilla explained the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:24-26).

They could have received John's baptism from the hands of John himself, or perhaps from some of John's disciples who continued on in his ministry after John's death.

John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance. Paul points out that John's baptism was one of repentance, not necessarily faith unto salvation. John's message pointed to Jesus, but did not take men there itself.

One can imagine that these Ephesian disciples heard about the coming of the Messiah through John's message, and they heard their need to be ready through repentance to receive the Messiah. Yet they actually do not seem to have heard that the Messiah had in fact come, and had not heard of their need to trust in His specific person and work.

Some have suggested that these Ephesian disciples were not actually Christians yet. The problem in this is that they are called disciples, which almost always refers to Christians, genuine followers of Jesus Christ. However, it must be said that the word disciple does have a broader understanding and application than its most frequent usage, describing a follower of Jesus.

However, Bruce makes the point: "When the men are called disciples without further qualification, that…seems to mean that they were disciples of Jesus. Had Luke meant to indicate that they were disciples of John the Baptist… he would have said so explicitly."

The twelve Ephesian disciples believe on Jesus**,** they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Having been completely prepared by their response to the preaching of John the Baptist, they were ready to embrace Jesus fully, and were baptized in the name of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit came upon them. After they were baptized, Paul… laid hands on them, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote the letters of 1 and 2 Corinthians during his stay in the city of Ephesus at this time, and 1 Corinthians has much to say about the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Now the men were about twelve in all. This reminds us that not all of the members of the church in Ephesus had this incomplete understanding and embrace of Jesus' person and work, but only a small group.

An often-debated question is, "Were these 12 Ephesian disciples actually Christians before this remarkable filling of the Holy Spirit, or not?" On the one hand, they were called disciples and appeared to be part of the company of Christians in Ephesus, things that would not usually be said of them if they were not actually Christians. On the other hand, they knew so little about Jesus, and they were baptized in water again, this time in the name of Jesus. It is difficult to say with certainty if they were already Christians or not, but one can say with certainty that Paul perceived they lacked something of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

It is fair for each Christian today to consider if someone were to look at their own life, would they notice a conspicuous absence of the Person and power of the Holy Spirit?

These Ephesian disciples sensed their need to get right with God, and knew the answer was in God's Messiah, but they had gone no further than that. They needed to go all the way, to trust in everything Jesus is and everything He had done, and to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Have ye then received the Spirit since you believed? Beloved, are you now receiving the Spirit? Are you living under His Divine influence? Are you filled with His power? Put the question personally. I am afraid some professors will have to admit that they hardly know whether there be any Holy Ghost; and others will have to confess that though they have enjoyed a little of His saving work, yet they do not know much of His ennobling and sanctifying influence." (Spurgeon)

God always wants us to go deeper. We tend to sip where we could drink deeply; we drink deeply where we could wade in, and we wade in where we could plunge in and swim. Most of us need to be encouraged to go deeper and further into the things of the Holy Spirit.

If someone doesn't seem to know if they have the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in their life, it's fair to assume that they don't have it. If you have it, you should know it. "Give a man an electric shock, and I warrant you he will know it; but if he has the Holy Ghost, he will know it much more." (Spurgeon) This isn't something to hope about, we can know we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Sons of Sceva

Act 19:11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: Act 19:12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Act 19:13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. Act 19:14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. Act 19:15 And the evil spirit answered and

said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? Act 19:16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. Act 19:17And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Act 19:18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Act 19:19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. Act 19:20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

This mention of healing brings to mind a previous event with Peter, do you remember? Here is a recap.

Act 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. Act 5:13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. Act 5:14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) Act 5:15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. Act 5:16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Luke carefully splits out the physically sick and the spiritually sick.

The apostles had abundance of patients, and gained a reputation both to themselves and their doctrine by the cure of them all. So many signs and wonders were wrought by the apostles that all manner of people put in for the benefit of them, both in city and country, and had it. In the city they brought forth their sick into the streets, for it is probable that the priests would not suffer them to bring them into the temple to Solomon’s porch, and the apostles had not got time to go to the houses of them all.

Why a shadow? What other strange methods of healing are there in the Bible?

There was an expectation of miracles among the early Christians.

They brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Our text does not specifically say people were healed by Peter’s shadow, it merely tells us people thought it would happen, and they took action based on this belief. We don’t know if people were actually healed when the shadow of Peter passed over them.

It may sound crazy that one could be healed by the touch of a shadow, but we know a touch of Jesus’ clothing healed a woman (Luke 8:44). There wasn’t anything magical in the garment, but it was a way that her faith was released.

“It may be significant that the verb episkiazo, which Luke chooses, meaning ‘to overshadow’, he has used twice in his Gospel of the overshadowing of God’s presence.” (Stott)

Luk 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Luk 9:33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. Luk 9:34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

Paul’s Healings.

Act 19:11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: Act 19:12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

Note that on only four occasions did Jesus heal remotely: the daughter of the Greek woman (Mark 7: 25-30); the centurion’s servant (Matthew 8: 5-13; Luke 7: 1-10); the nobleman’s son (John 4: 46-53); and the opportunistic healing of the woman who touched the hem of His garment (Mark 5: 24-34; when this miracle occurred, Jesus was on His way to heal the daughter of Jairus). Nowhere is it said that Jesus healed through the distribution of ‘handkerchiefs and aprons’ or called on the crowds to simply touch Him. In short, it was rare for the healing to be conferred other than in the presence of the healer.

I think that these manifestations were to add credibility to the words of the Apostles, as we have observed. *Heb 2:4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.*

It is not made clear whether the people healed were Jews, Gentiles, believers or unbelievers and it does not seem that the primary activity of the early church is to go out and rid the world of physical sickness. What is clear is that there was a broad spectrum of diseases healed and that the world of demons and ‘possession was a present reality to the disciples.

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” There were seven sons of Sceva and a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them,

overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists. At that time, there were Jewish exorcists who practiced their trade with a lot of superstition and ceremony. Here, a group of them tried to imitate what they thought was Paul's formula for success.

We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches. The Jewish exorcists failed because they had no personal relationship with Jesus. They only knew that Jesus was the God of Paul, not their own God.

We could say that the sons of Sceva did not have the right to use the name of Jesus, because they had no real personal connection to Him. In the same pattern, there are many people, many churchgoers, who will perish in hell because they have no personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They only know "the Jesus the pastor preaches" or "the Jesus my spouse believes in" instead of the Jesus of their own salvation.

And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" The evil spirit knew exactly who Jesus was, and knew exactly who Paul was, but they didn't know who the seven sons of Sceva were. Apparently, evil spirits know who their enemies are (in this case, Jesus and Paul), and they don't waste their effort knowing those who aren't a threat to them (in this case, the seven sons of Sceva).

Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them. Because the seven sons of Sceva had no real relationship with Jesus, they had no spiritual power against the evil spirit. They left the encounter naked and wounded. It was dangerous for them to take the reality of spiritual warfare lightly.

A Riot at Ephesus

Act 19:21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. Act 19:22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. Act 19:23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. Act 19:24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Act 19:25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Act 19:26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: Act 19:27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. Act 19:28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Act 19:29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre. Act 19:30 And when Paul would have entered in

unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. Act 19:31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. Act 19:32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. Act 19:33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. Act 19:34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Act 19:35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Act 19:36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. Act 19:37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Act 19:38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. Act 19:39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. Act 19:40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. Act 19:41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Paul purposed in the Spirit. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Paul planned his itinerary. he decided to travel through Macedonia and Achaia, then to Jerusalem, then to Rome.

Luke doesn’t mention it here, but we know that one reason why Paul wanted to go through Macedonia and Achaia, then to Jerusalem was to collect and deliver a fund he had been collecting from other churches to help out the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-31; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4).

I must also see Rome, reflects Paul’s passion to visit and serve the Christian community that was already there. That passion is also mentioned in Romans 1:8-15.

So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus. Paul sent Timothy and Erastus on ahead to Macedonia, while he stayed in Ephesus (Asia) for a time. A significant part of the work of Timothy and Erastus was simply to help Paul. They were truly assistants to the apostle, helping Paul to maximize his ministry.

Demetrius, a maker of idols, opposed Paul because his business had suffered. When the work was going so well, and when Paul was thinking about leaving Ephesus, another commotion arose. Again, for the third time in Acts (and the second time in this chapter) the Christian movement is called the Way.

The tremendous temple to Diana (also known as Artemis) in Ephesus was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was supported by 127 pillars, each 60 feet high, and was decorated with great sculptures. It was lost to history until it was discovered in 1869, and its main altar was unearthed in 1965.

“The epicenter of Artemis worship was a black meteorite that either resembled or had been fashioned into a grotesque image of a woman. The lower part was wrapped like a mummy…the idol was covered with breasts, symbolizing fertility.” (Hughes)

“The Temple of Artemis was also a major treasury and bank of the ancient world, where merchants, kings, and even cities made deposits, and where their money could be kept safe under the protection of deity.” (Longenecker)

The temple of Diana in Ephesus was indeed famous around the world. The trinkets and idols from it must have been a substantial trade, no matter how immoral the worship of the sex-goddess was. The opposition of Demetrius and the other idol makers was a great compliment to the effectiveness of Paul’s work in the region. Paul was not on a campaign to close down the temple of Diana; he just did the Lord’s work. As people came to Jesus, they naturally stopped worshipping Diana and buying shrines associated with the temple.

The riot builds momentum.
So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theatre with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defence to the people. But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

Considering Rome’s iron-fisted attitude towards such civil disorder, things were rapidly getting out of hand. It has often happened in the history of Christianity that when God moves among His people and they become very serious about their Christianity, that it affects the livelihood of those who trade in vice or immorality. For example, in the early years of the Salvation Army, they were so effective that pimps and bar owners organized a “Skeleton Army” to oppose them with threats and violence and even a few Salvation Army workers were murdered.

The city clerk is able to calm the passion of the crowd. The city clerk (something like the mayor of the city) spoke sensible words. Luke wanted to show that rational people saw nothing to fear or oppose in Christianity.

God worked mightily in Ephesus, but so did the devil. This may be one reason why Paul wrote so specifically about the spiritual battle each Christian faces against powers of spiritual darkness in his letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:10-20).

The Chronological Bible diverts to 1 and 2 Corinthians here.

The church which Paul has established in Corinth during his second missionary journey was very diverse including men and women, rich and poor. The report from Chloe's household informed Paul of divisions in the church, they were developing conflicting loyalties to different human teachers.

1*Co 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1Co 1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 1Co 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. 1Co 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*

He wanted them to understand that salvation is not based on human wisdom or personalities but on Christ crucified and the work of God in building His church.

The second letter to the Corinthians was written probably 6 months to a year later. The church required his ongoing care.

Paul sent a severe letter and then when he was reconciled he wrote again to celebrate their restored relationship and to have them prepare for another visit.

At sometime-before or while he was in Ephesus Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians. This letter, which preceded 1 Corinthians, is unfortunately no longer extant. The contents of this "previous letter" (as it is called) are not completely known, yet some of it may be drawn from 1 Corinthians. First Corinthians is a response to a letter that Paul received from the Corinthian church, which they wrote probably as a response to this previous letter. The apostle writes in 1 Cor. 5:9, "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people." All that can be concluded about the previous letter are the following three facts, the letter was written after Paul's stay in Corinth, but before the composition of 1 Corinthians (c. AD 53-54); this letter dealt (at least in part) with the issue of associating with the sexually immoral, and his letter was misunderstood or not taken seriously.

Paul's writing said he wrote other epistles that we do not have. *1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:*

Not in this same epistle, and in 1Co 5:2 as some think, for what is here observed is not written in either of those verses, but in some other epistle he had sent them before, as is clear from 1 Co 5:11 which either came not to hand, or else was neglected by them, and so what he here says may be considered as a reproof to them, for taking no notice of his advice. No doubt the apostle wrote other epistles to the Corinthians, besides those that we have nor does such a supposition detract from the perfection of Scripture, for not all that were written by him were by divine inspiration, and as many as were so, and were necessary for the perfection of the canon of Scripture, and to instruct us in the whole counsel of God, have been preserved nor is this any contradiction to this epistle's being his first to this church, for though it might not be his first to them, yet it is

the first to them still with us, what he had written to them in another epistle was not.

Acts Chapter 20

Paul in Macedonia and Greece

Act 20:1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. Act 20:2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, Act 20:3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. Act 20:4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. Act 20:5 These going before tarried for us at Troas. Act 20:6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

From Ephesus, Paul travels to Macedonia.

After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia**.** The rioting in Ephesus (Acts 19) had convinced Paul to move on, so he went westward across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia (modern Greece). Paul couldn't leave without a demonstration of love to his fellow followers of Jesus. He spent two very fruitful years in Ephesus, but it was now time to go.

Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia, also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.

Paul spent his time working with the churches he had already established, as recorded in Acts 16-17.

"One activity that especially concerned Paul at this time was collecting money for the relief of impoverished believers at Jerusalem…Paul viewed it as a symbol of unity that would help his Gentile converts realize their debt to the mother church in Jerusalem." (Longenecker)

Paul's extended time in this region may help to explain a bit of a puzzle. In Romans 15:19, Paul made this claim: So that from Jerusalem and round to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. The puzzle is that the Book of Acts never specifically mentions a visit by Paul to Illyricum, but it may fit neatly in here at Acts 20:2-3, where Paul had gone over that region… and stayed three months. Illyricum is due west from Thessalonica, and there was a famous Roman Road (the Via Egnatia) that went between Thessalonica and the Roman province of Illyricum. Today, the area of Illyricum is modern day Albania, on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, with the mainland of Italy westward across the water.

The mention of Illyricum in Romans 15:19 reminds us that the Book of Acts, as wonderful as it is, is by no means a complete accounting of all that God did

through His people in the first century. There is much, even in the life of the Apostle Paul that is not described, not to mention the lives and work of many, many others.

When the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. From Greece, Paul had planned to take the long journey by sea directly back to Syria (where his sending church at Antioch was), but the plotting of some anti-Christian Jews made him take a more overland route back through Macedonia, accompanied by many companions.

Sopater of Berea… Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians… Gaius of Derbe… Trophimus of Asia. These travelling companions of Paul were probably representatives from other churches who had sent money with Paul to Jerusalem. They were also present as ambassadors from the churches Paul has founded among the Gentiles, and were there to vouch for Paul's good stewardship in regard to the collection destined for Jerusalem.

Sopater of Berea**.** John Gill tells us that this Sopater is thought to be the same with Sosipater in Rom 16:21 and the Ethiopic version calls him Peter, a citizen of Berea, and the Arabic version Sopater of Aleppo. The Alexandrian copy, Beza's most ancient copy, and others, the Complutensian edition, and the Vulgate Latin version, read, Sopater of Pyrrhus, the Berean; that is, the son of Pyrrhus. He is reckoned among the seventy disciples, and is said to be bishop of Iconium. This name was common among the Greeks, there was one of this name a native of Paphus, in the times of Alexander the great, a comical poet, and who also is sometimes called Sosipater, as this man was, there was another Sopater the sophist, who wrote the affairs of Alexander, and there was another of this name, who, among other things, collected much concerning painters and statuaries. The name signifies "a father saved".

Aristarchus and Secundus both came from Thessalonica. Aristarchus' name was connected with aristocracy, the ruling class. It's likely that he came from a wealthy and powerful family. Secundus was a common name for a slave. It meant "Second." Slaves were often not called by their true names, and the first-ranking slave in a household would often be called Primus. The second-ranking slave was often called Secundus. It's nice to think of Christians from both high and low stations in life serving the Lord together, from Thessalonica and helping the Apostle Paul.

They sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

We sailed away… we stayed seven days. Luke has resumed the "we" narrative. He met Paul in Philippi and then sailed with Paul to Troas where they met Paul's other travelling companions. Paul had left Luke in Philippi in Acts 16:40.

Eutychus Raised from the Dead

Act 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. Act 20:8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. Act 20:9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the

third loft, and was taken up dead. Act 20:10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. Act 20:11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. Act 20:12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. Act 20:13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. Act 20:14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. Act 20:15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus. Act 20:16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

A long sermon and Eutychus raised from the dead.

Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread. This is the first certain example we have of Christians making a practice to gather together on the first day of the week for fellowship and it seems they gathered in the evening, because Sunday was a normal working day for them.

Paul sensed the need to preach for a long time because he was ready to depart the next day. He knew he might never see these particular Christians again, so he preached for some six hours to them!

The combination of the late hour, the heat, and perhaps the fumes from the oil lamps made the young man Eutychus fall asleep. His fall and death certainly would have put a sour note on the meeting.

Paul taught for many hours and after a long day of work for most of his audience. There is also some evidence that Eutychus fought sleep the best he could. “The tenses of the Greek verbs portray poor Eutychus as being gradually overcome despite his struggle to remain awake.” (Hughes)

Yet in the end, sleep got the better of him. “The word translated ‘sleep’ is the word from which we derive our English word hypnosis.” (Hughes)

Paul, again receiving the gift of faith from God, sensed that God would raise this boy from the dead and God did.

“Paul’s comment that the boy’s life was in him refers to his condition after he had ministered to him. Luke would not have devoted space to the raising up of somebody who was merely apparently dead.” (Marshall)

Paul, obviously getting their attention back, continued preaching until daybreak.

Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders.

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

Act 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. Act 20:18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know,

from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Act 20:19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: Act 20:20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Act 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Act 20:22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Act 20:23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. Act 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Act 20:25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Act 20:26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. Act 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Act 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Act 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Act 20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Act 20:31Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. Act 20:32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Act 20:33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Act 20:34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. Act 20:35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Act 20:36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. Act 20:37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Act 20:38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Paul comes to Miletus and sends for the elders of the church in Ephesus to meet him there.
He had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. Paul apparently preferred to walk from Troas to Assos instead of sail with the rest of his group, but he sailed with them from Assos to Miletus.

Paul “stayed till the last possible moment, probably to be assured of Eutychus’s complete restoration to consciousness and health, and then took a shortcut by land to join the ship at Assos.” (Bruce).

Paul’s intention wasn’t to slight the church in Ephesus, but he knew that it would be impossible for him to have a short visit there, and he wanted to hurry to Jerusalem. Paul knew he couldn’t make a brief visit to Ephesus, he still wanted to pour his heart into the leaders of the church at Ephesus, so he called for the elders of the church to come for a special meeting.

This determination to get to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost **is** curious, it was fifty days from the second day of the Passover, which feast was over when he sailed from Philippi, and at Troas he stayed seven days, and he had been several days sailing already. His great desire to be at the feast of Pentecost was not in order to keep that feast, according to the usage of the Jews, but that he might have an opportunity of preaching the Gospel to a great number of Jews, out of all countries, whom he knew would come to that feast.

Paul begins his farewell to the elders of Ephesus by recounting his work among them. Most of the time in Acts, we see Paul the evangelist, but here in we get a unique picture of Paul the pastor, what was important to him as a leader and shepherd of God's people.

"It is the only Pauline speech delivered to Christians which Luke has recorded, and it is not surprising to discover how rich it is in parallels to the Pauline letters (especially, in fact, to the later ones)." (Bruce)

Paul first calls attention to himself as an example. Not an example instead of Jesus, but an example as he followed Jesus. Paul didn't act like a religious celebrity and expect people to serve and honour him, he just wanted to be serving the Lord with all humility.

I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you. Paul could solemnly say before these elders of the Ephesian church that he kept back nothing that was helpful. He didn't only teach the topics that pleased him. He proclaimed it all.

Paul testified to Jews, and also to Greeks. If Paul didn't limit his message, he didn't limit his audience either. He wanted to preach all the word of God to all people. From house to house implies that the Ephesian church, lacking any central building, was organized logically in house churches. Probably, each elder had charge over a particular house church. These were much more like house church pastors than what we think of today as a board of elders who presided over one large congregation.

Paul moves on to speak of his future.

"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

Paul didn't know what was ahead of him, he even had reason to believe it was bad. But that didn't trouble him. He could give it all over to God even when he didn't know what would happen. There should always be more Christians who will say, "none of these things move me."

Uncertainty did not move Paul. Even though he was "not knowing the things that will happen to me there," he would not be moved from his cause. Paul could sing this Psalm from his heart: I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. (Psalm 16:8)

Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. Paul recognized the dangerous road ahead of him, apparently he had received many words of prophecy telling him of this danger already. Yet he was not set off the track by danger, but was willing to lay down his life for the gospel of the grace of God. Paul thought of himself as an accountant, weighing carefully the credits and the expenses and in the end, he does not count his own life dear to him, compared to his God and how he can serve Him.

So that I may finish my race with joy. Paul thought of himself as a runner who had a race to finish, and nothing would keep Paul from finishing the race with joy. Additionally, Paul speaks of my race, he had his race to run, we have our own, but God calls us to finish it with joy.

This shows that even at this point, Paul had his death in mind. It would be many years until he actually died, but he considered that what he did with his life now was worth dying for. In the words of Spurgeon, he preached a gospel worth dying for. It is a worthy challenge to any Christian is the gospel you preach worth dying for?

Spurgeon observes. “Yet there used to be a gospel in the world which consisted of facts which Christians never questioned. There was once in the church a gospel which believers hugged to their hearts as if it were their soul’s life. There used to be a gospel in the world, which provoked enthusiasm and commanded sacrifice. Tens of thousands have met together to hear this gospel at peril of their lives. Men, to the teeth of tyrants, have proclaimed it, and have suffered the loss of all things, and gone to prison and to death for it, singing psalms all the while. Is there not such a gospel remaining?”

A Sad Goodbye.

Paul announces that he probably won’t see the Ephesian elders again. Paul did a lot in Ephesus. In that city God used him to work some amazing miracles.

· Acts 19:11 says that in Ephesus, the hands of Paul did unusual miracles.
· Acts 19:12 says that in Ephesus, handkerchiefs or aprons from Paul’s body were brought to sick people and they were healed and delivered from demonic spirits.
· Acts 19:15 says that in Ephesus, demonic spirits said they knew Paul and his ministry.

With all that, Paul didn’t say to the Ephesian elders here, “You all, among whom I did some awesome miracles.” or, “You all, among whom even the demons said they knew me.” Instead Paul was always focused on the life-transforming power of the word of God, and he said “You all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God.”

It’s as if Paul said, “This is what I do. Sure, I do a lot of other things, but at the core I’m a preacher, and I preach the kingdom of God.”

You all… will see my face no more. Paul showed great sadness, great compassion, and great courage. He told them something he hadn’t told them before, that this would probably be the last time they saw him, and he saw them. This would be like a bombshell to these church leaders.

Don’t forget the great bond Paul had with these Ephesian leaders. He was in Ephesus for three years, and the ministry was so effective that Acts 19:10 says, all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. That amount of time and that kind of effective ministry builds bonds of fellowship and friendship that last.

It was hard for them to believe it. Maybe at first they thought he was joking. But they quickly understood that he wasn’t and they understood why he asked them to walk 36 miles to meet with him.

In all of this, Paul’s great love and concern for the leaders and the congregation in Ephesus was simply a reflection of Jesus’ great love and concern for them. Paul followed Jesus in every way he could, since Jesus loved these believers so much, so did Paul.

It’s fascinating to think of how much this segment of Paul’s life mirrored the life of Jesus.

· Like Jesus, Paul travelled to Jerusalem with a group of His disciples.
· Like Jesus, Paul was opposed by hostile Jews who plotted against his life.
· Like Jesus, Paul made or received three successive predictions of his coming sufferings in Jerusalem, including being handed over to the Gentiles.
· Like Jesus, Paul declared his readiness to lay down his life.
· Like Jesus, he was determined to complete his ministry and not be deflected from it.
· Like Jesus, he expressed his abandonment to the will of God.

Would we expect any different? We too should expect to know the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10).

Paul makes a solemn declaration of his innocence before God.
“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”

Therefore. There is much wrapped up in this simple word. It has the sense of, because I probably won’t see you again… because I love you so much…because I have invested so much of my heart and life among you all… you therefore need to know that.

I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. As if he were giving witness in a court of law, Paul declared that his heart was clear. He could leave these Christians to God’s care with a good conscience, knowing that he had not shunned to declare to them the whole counsel of God.

We should have a greater appreciation of the value of a clear conscience. God helping us, we can have one, at least as clear as possible from this point forward. Paul could leave them with a clear conscience because he knew that he taught them the whole counsel of God. Acts 19:9-10 tells us that Paul taught the Ephesians and those in the region for more than two years, using a rented room from the school of Tyrannus. There are some indications that Paul taught for several hours a day, and some six days a week. This means hundreds of hours of teaching time (probably well more than 1,500 hours).

He had plenty of time to take them verse-by-verse through the books of the Hebrew Scriptures. They may have also studied the life of Jesus from some of the accounts of His life being written in that same period.

Today, there should be more and more who will present the whole counsel of God. Paul later warned that in the last days, people would not endure sound doctrine, but would look for teachers who would tell them what they want to hear, teachers who would scratch their itching ears (2 Timothy 4:3).

Many preachers today simply use a Bible text as a launching pad, and then go on to say what they want and what the people want to hear. Others throw in Bible quotations to illustrate their points, or to illustrate their stories. Yet the real calling of a preacher is to simply let the Bible speak for itself and let it declare its own power.

Taking Paul's testimony at full strength, we must say that those preachers who deliberately fail to declare… the whole counsel of God are guilty of the blood of all men. The preacher who preaches what his audience wants to hear, and not the whole counsel of God, hurts both his audience and himself!

Paul encourages them to take heed to themselves and to God's people. *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."*

Therefore. This is Paul's second therefore in this section. The first therefore looked at his own life (I testify to you that I am innocent of the blood of all men). This second therefore instructs the leaders of the Ephesian Christians. "Pay attention to your own life. You have a high standard to fulfil. The standard isn't perfection, but it is nevertheless high. You won't fulfil that high standard without paying attention to it, if you don't take heed to yourselves."

These words from Paul were all the more dramatic knowing the tension and the atmosphere of this meeting. These words mattered.

The godly leader knows that effective leadership flows from a life, not just knowledge.

Take heed… to all the flock. "Pay attention to the people of God. Love them, look over them, care for them. Do it because the Holy Spirit has made you overseers."

Shepherd the church of God. Flock has the idea of sheep, shepherd the church of God continues that thought. He is telling them to be pastors, to serve their house church congregations as faithful pastors. The first idea behind being a shepherd is feeding God's people. "They are to be shepherds of God's church, poimanino meaning in general to tend a flock and in particular *to* lead a flock to pasture and so to feed it. This is the first duty of shepherds." (Stott)

Shepherds don't only *f*eed, they also lead. Under the guidance of the Chief Shepherd and in the community of God's people, they lead the people of God to where God wants them to be.

Which He purchased with His own blood. This is one important reason why they had to take heed to themselves and to the flock of God. They had to do it

because the church doesn't belong to them, it belongs to Jesus who purchased it with His own blood.

Any responsible person is going to take greater care of something that belongs to someone else. Leaders need to remember that the church belongs to Jesus. Taken together, it's really a wonderful balance:
· The sheep need to remember that God has appointed shepherds to feed and lead them.
· The shepherds need to remember that the flock belongs to God, and not to them.

Considering the greatness of the price, this calls leaders among God's people to be dedicated and godly, His own blood.

Take heed to the flock because of danger from the outside.
"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." Paul presses the urgency here, warning these leaders that savage wolves will come in among them all. He knew that a pastor, a leader among God's people has to do more than only feed and lead, he also has to protect.

Paul doesn't say how he knew; only that he did know. These wolves would be vicious. They wouldn't hold back against the people of God, but take as many of them as they could.

Take heed to the flock because of danger from the inside.
"Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." It is often easier for pastors to deal with the wolves that come from the outside, obviously false teachings and strange winds of doctrine. But it is often very difficult to deal with those who rise up from among yourselves.

Imagine how these men listening to Paul would have received this. It would be hard to believe, and like the disciples with Jesus, many of them would say, "Not me, Lord!"

Further encouragement to watch.
Paul asked them to have the same careful concern for the people of God that he himself had.
· It was a long-term care (for three years).
· It was a constant care (did not cease).
· It was a watchful care (to warn).
· It was a universal care (everyone).
· It was a heart-felt care (with tears).

Paul's conclusion: Remember a heart of sacrifice.
"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must

support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Though Paul gave his all for the Christians in Ephesus for some three years, at the bottom line, he could only commend them to God and to the word of His grace. Paul knew there was trouble ahead for him, and some trouble ahead for the Ephesian Christians. Yet God and the word of His grace would see them through.

Programs can't do it, the spirit of the age can't do it, slick marketing can't do it, entertainment can't do it, only God and the word of His grace can build you up and give you an inheritance in heaven.

I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Paul concludes by trying to communicate his heart, his motive in ministry. He wasn't in it for himself, but for God's glory and for the building up of God's people. Labouring like this means that Paul was a hard worker for God's glory.

It is more blessed to give than to receive. His parting words, taken from a quote of Jesus' unrecorded in the gospels, are perfect for all who would minister to God's people. Leaders must be more concerned about what they can give their flock than concerned about what their flock can give them.

Without a heart of sacrifice there can be no real effective, eternal ministry and it should be a glad sacrifice, knowing the blessedness of it all.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive". In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us how to be blessed; here, He tells us how to be more blessed! It should not make us stumble to consider that Jesus taught many things unrecorded in the gospels, John said as much in John 21:25, but we can trust that God has preserved all that is necessary of the teaching of Jesus.

Paul's tearful good-bye to the Ephesian elders.

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

He knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely. This reminds us that Paul was not a cold dispenser of doctrine, but a warm, pastoral man who loved his people greatly and won great love from them. They part with prayer, tears, and a sending-off party, believing they would only meet again in eternity.

Given the strength of Paul's warning to these leaders, it is fair to wonder how the Christian community in Ephesus fared after this. Some 30 to 40 years later, Jesus sent a letter to this church in Ephesus, found in Revelation Chapter 2. He complimented them on many things:

· Their hard work for the kingdom of God.
· Their endurance through difficult times.
· Their dealing with those who are evil, and with false apostles.
· Not giving up when they were weary.

Yet despite it all, Jesus also gave them a severe warning, they had left their first love (Revelation 2:4). Unless things changed in a hurry, Jesus wouldn't even be present among them anymore.

It may well be that in their zeal to fight against false doctrine, which they seemed to do well, they left their love for Jesus and their love for one another behind. It's a great illustration of the principle that the devil doesn't care which side of the boat we fall out of, just as long as we're in the water and not in the boat.

The Chronological Bible diverts to Romans here.

From the earliest time no one has questioned that the author of this epistle was Paul. Paul wrote Romans from Corinth. Gaius who was Paul's host at the time of writing had been one of the prominent converts of his ministry in Corinth. *Rom 16:23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.* Phoebe who delivered the epistle was a member of the church in Cenchrea a harbour town near Corinth. *Rom 16:27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. Written to the Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea.*

The letter is dated towards the later part of Paul's missionary work when he was engaged in the collection of a fund for the church in Jerusalem. When Paul writes to the Corinthians while travelling from Ephesus to Corinth the collection was still incomplete. (2 Cor 8). At the time he wrote to the Romans the collection appears to be complete, *Rom 15:25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. Rom 15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.*

Romans curiously was written in Greek. Why did Paul write in Greek rather than in Latin? Perhaps there is a very simple answer, everybody in Rome spoke Greek. Greek was the universal urban language of the eastern Roman provinces.

It is no accident that all the documents of the New Testament and virtually all other extant writings from the first two centuries of Christianity were written in Greek. Greek was the language of all the Jewish diaspora communities within the Roman Empire from which evidence has survived.

Acts Chapter 21.

I have thoroughly enjoyed travelling with Paul throughout the Gentile nations to preach the gospel, and have seen a great harvest of souls gathered in to Christ, we have also seen the persecutions he endured yet still out of them all the Lord delivered him.

2Ti 3:11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

It is sad that such a workman should be laid aside, yet so it is, and we must not

only acquiesce, as his friends then did, saying, "The will of the Lord be done" but we must believe, and will find reason to do so, that Paul in the prison, and at the bar, is as much glorifying God, and serving Christ's interest, as Paul in the pulpit was.

In this chapter we have:

- A journal of Paul's voyage from Ephesus to Caesarea, the next sea-port to Jerusalem, some places he touched at, and his landing there (v. 1-7).
- The struggles he had with his friends at Caesarea, who mightily opposed his going up to Jerusalem, but could not prevail (v. 8-14).
- Paul's journey from Caesarea to Jerusalem, and the kind welcome which the Christians there gave him (v. 15-17).
- His compliance with the persuasions of the brethren there, who advised him so far to compliment the Jews as to go and purify that it might appear he was no such enemy to the Mosaic rites and ceremonies as he was reported to be (v. 18-26).
- The turning of this very thing against him by the Jews, and the apprehending of him in the temple as a criminal (v. 27-30).
- The narrow escape he had of being pulled to pieces by the rabble, and the taking of him into fair and legal custody by the chief captain, who permitted him to speak for himself to the people (v. 31-40).
- And so we have him made a prisoner, and shall never have him otherwise to the end of the history of this book.

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

Act 21:1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Cos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: Act 21:2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. Act 21:3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. Act 21:4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. Act 21:5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. Act 21:6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. Act 21:7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. Act 21:8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. Act 21:9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. Act 21:10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. Act 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. Act 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Act 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Act 21:14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. Act 21:15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. Act 21:16 There

went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

We see who Paul's companions are and who he associates with quite clearly here. When the ship docks he looks for Christian company. The word implies much more than a casual search. It means a diligent search and comes from the root Eureka!

Does it really matter who your friends are? Can any harm come out of friendships with people who have no intention of following Christ? The Bible says that it can. What should influence our choice of companions, what should we look for? The book of Psalms starts off with a blessing on Godly relationships. *Psa 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* We are given the image of a man who finds himself walking life's road with wicked men, he then stops in his tracks with them as his conversation progresses and before long he is comfortably sitting at ease with their scornful ways. It has brought him low, he has compromised.

Do we value enough the things of God and His people? The Psalmist reminds us of how much better it is to be on the fringe of the things of God rather than in the tents of wicked men. *Psa 84:10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* It's a thousand times better, but do you believe it?

There was a case recently where a woman was given four years in prison for charity fraud, she mixed with fools and hangers on, buying their friendship and destroying herself. The Proverb is true. *Pro 13:20 He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

What follows in the wake of such company? It is shame and poverty. *Pro 28:7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father. Pro 28:19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.*

Parents will have shame if they encourage the young ones in the company of fools and by company it can be books, games, TV you name it. Company is where you spend your time.

And who picks up the pieces from the foolish relationships? It is the Christian and the church who care ultimately. That foolish girl who spent the money of others was all of a sudden deserted. There was no real security in those relationships.

Be careful of the yokes you forge for they may destroy you. *2Co 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2Co 6:15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my*

people. 2Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

It has been said, though not in Scripture that “the road to hell is paved with good intent”. It might also say that the road to hell is paved with compromise.

Sometimes self preservation or the preservation of life becomes more important in the eyes of men than God’s purpose. Peter’s short term good intent would have destroyed salvation, he compromised our position by his short sightedness. *Mat 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Mat 16:22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. Mat 16:23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*

Part of the problem lies in our blinkered and short term view of life. We have a narrow perspective and we think in days rather than decades. We should develop a long term view and try to understand what God is doing.

Do you recall when Moses killed the Egyptian and suffered rebuke for it? *Exo 2:11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. Exo 2:12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.*

There is a wonderful commentary on this in Acts Chapter 7. *Act 7:22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. Act 7:23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. Act 7:24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: Act 7:25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.*

He thought that the Israelites would have understood it was part of his mission as deliverer. His brethren clearly lacked visions or rather lacked Moses’ vision.

Paul knew God’s purpose for him and would not be persuaded otherwise. How much better to say at the start “God’s will be done”, than at the end of an argument as here.

Paul knew with Joseph of old that what appeared to be short term evil is long term good. *Gen 50:19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

Do not compromise the future for short term advantage.

The Church in Tyre.

We are not told how a church was planted in Tyre, but there were disciples there. This reminds us that the Book of Acts gives only a partial picture of the early church's activity.

They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. Apparently, among the disciples at Tyre, some prophesied of the danger that awaited Paul in Jerusalem, something that he had been warned about before in several other places (Acts 20:22-23).

It would seem that the specific warning not to go up to Jerusalem was a human interpretation of the Holy Spirit's prophecy of the danger that awaited Paul. Otherwise it is difficult to see why Paul would have gone against the Holy Spirit's direction, unless he was in direct rebellion.

Acts 8:40 tells us that after Philip's work in bringing the Ethiopian eunuch to faith, he preached through the coastal region and ended up in Caesarea. Many years later he was still there.

It's a wonderful title Philip the evangelist, he was known by the good news he presented to other people, the good news about who Jesus is and what He did for us.

It is interesting that with these four daughters who had the gift of prophecy, none of them seemed to tell Paul anything about his upcoming time in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit could have used them, but He chose to use someone else.

A certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. In the spirit of Old Testament prophets, Agabus acted out his message to Paul, that certain danger awaited him at Jerusalem. This is the same man whom is mentioned in Act 11:28 who is said to come from Jerusalem, to Antioch, and here from Judea to Caesarea, he had been many years going about from place to place prophesying, for between that and this account must be a space of about sixteen or seventeen years.

So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. The prophecy of Agabus was true, and genuinely from the Holy Spirit. But to this true word, they added a human application (they pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem). That additional word was not of the Lord, otherwise Paul would have been disobedient to go to Jerusalem.

Act 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. This verse shows that even Luke and Paul's travelling companions tried to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem (both we and those from that place pleaded with him).

Paul had received several prophetic words on this very topic. This is God's custom with such a remarkable prophecy, that there should be a great deal of confirmation, as there was in Macedonia (Acts 20:22-23), in Tyre (Acts 21:4) and now in Caesarea.

For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul insists on going to Jerusalem despite the dangers predicted by the Holy Spirit, this was not a result of rebellion, but an obedient response to the command of the Holy Spirit in his heart. He was bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem as we have seen (Acts 19:21 and 20:22).

The warnings from the Holy Spirit were intended to prepare Paul, not to stop him.

The will of the Lord be done, Paul's companions, including Luke came to the understanding that God's will would be done. They came to trust that even if Paul was probably right, and even if he was wrong, God would use it.

Again, the warnings of danger came from the Holy Spirit and were meant to prepare Paul. The request to turn back was understandable, even logical, yet it wasn't of God. They recognized as much when they attributed Paul's insistence to go to Jerusalem despite the danger as the will of the Lord. It is easy to do, and a source of trouble, when we add our interpretation or application to what is thought to be a word from God, often thinking that it is also from the Lord. We often find it too easy to judge God's will for someone else.

Paul Visits James

Act 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. Act 21:18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. Act 21:19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. Act 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: Act 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. Act 21:22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. Act 21:23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Act 21:24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. Act 21:25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. Act 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

Mission

There is in the mind of many the idea that Paul is making a compromise here with regard to the Law of Moses. Much of Paul's writings teach against the bondage of Old Testament Law and so it appears here that in taking vow associating with men who are going through a Jewish ritual, Paul has made a backward move and has compromised his position. *Gal 2:17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ*

the minister of sin? God forbid. Gal 2:18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. Gal 2:19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Gal 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

This is not the case.

1. The Holy Spirit made it clear that Gentiles had no obligation to the Mosaic code. That has not changed here. *Act 15:20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.*
2. If the Jews wanted to continue in various aspects of this code, that was acceptable. It was acceptable I suggest so far as:
    a. If it did not compromise or supplement Christ's work.
    b. It was not imposed upon Gentile believers. *Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* Clearly peter compromised.
3. What Paul is undertaking is expedient to show the Jews that he who is also a Jew has not been teaching the Jews to apostatise.

For example, I don't believe in the validity of any feasts in the Church of Christ (other than the Lord's Table). That would not stop me going to an Easter service in an Anglican church, if by that act I removed hostility and suspicion.

Paul was flexible, he was big enough in the faith to understand and enter into the position of others. *1Co 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 1Co 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 1Co 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

Rather than erect barriers, Paul would remove them and come to an understanding of another's position. He would correct them on their own ground. It will reflect your own self confidence and strength. This is not compromise, it is expediency.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul met with the leaders of the church there (James and all the elders), and gave them a full report of his work in preaching and planting churches. The elders in Jerusalem were thankful for what God was doing among the Gentiles. They saw some of the Gentile converts with Paul and could tell of their genuine love for and commitment to Jesus.

Jewish Christians.

Act 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: The elders of Jerusalem were happy for what God was doing among the Gentiles. Yet in Jerusalem the Christian community was almost entirely from a Jewish background, and these Christians still valued many of the Jewish laws and customs. They were still zealous for the law.

They have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses. The Christian community of Jerusalem heard bad, false rumours about Paul. They heard that he had become essentially anti-Jewish, and told Jewish Christians that it was wrong for them to continue in Jewish laws and customs.

Based on Romans it seems that Paul didn't have a problem with Jewish Christians who wanted to continue to observe old customs and laws. *Rom 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. Rom 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. Rom 14:6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.* It seems that he himself did so sometimes, such as when he took and fulfilled a vow of consecration in Acts 18:18-21 (probably a Nazirite vow). Paul seemed fine with this, as long *as* they didn't think it made them more right before God.

The Elders advised Paul to both join and sponsor these four Christians from a Jewish background. The Jerusalem elders believed this would convince everyone that Paul did not preach against Jewish laws and customs for those Christians who wanted to observe them.

Paul agreed to do this, to demonstrate that he never taught Christian Jews to forsake Moses and not to circumcise their children and that they were required to ignore Jewish customs, as he had been falsely accused by some among the Jerusalem Christians.

The Jerusalem elders understood that this had nothing to do with Gentiles who believe in Jesus. It didn't mean that they had to perform any Jewish rituals to be right with God. Paul would rightly refuse to compromise on this important point.

Then Paul took the men, Paul could agree to this and sponsor the four men taking the vow of consecration because there was never a hint that such things would be required of Gentiles as a test of righteousness.

"He had shown them that their ceremonies were useless but not destructive, that they were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation." (Clarke)

Many commentators believe this was a terrible compromise on Paul's part and that he was a hypocrite. Yet the motive behind Paul's sponsorship of these Christian Jews completing their Nazirite vow is explained in *1 Corinthians 9:20: And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law.*

It's important to understand that this offering, an animal sacrifice, was not in any way for the purpose of atonement or forgiveness. Paul absolutely understood that only the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross atones for sin. Yet not every sacrifice in the Jewish system was for atonement, many were for thanksgiving or dedication, as this one was.

Paul Arrested in the Temple

Act 21:27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Act 21:28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. Act 21:29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) Act 21:30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. Act 21:31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Act 21:32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. Act 21:33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. Act 21:34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. Act 21:35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. Act 21:36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd, they claimed that Paul was against the people [Israel], the law, and this place [the temple], but these accusations were unfounded. Paul simply rejected trust in any of these as a basis for righteousness before God, which comes only through Jesus Christ.

The charges against Paul were an echo of the charges Stephen was executed for. *Act 6:13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:* Paul helped preside over that execution, now he is accused in a similar way.

The crowd was enlarged because it was feast-time. It was enraged because they believed Paul not only preached against the people, the law, and the temple, but also profaned the temple by bringing Gentiles into its inner courts.

Trophimus the Ephesian is named as the man they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. It was absolutely prohibited for Gentiles to go beyond the designated "Court of the Gentiles" in the temple grounds. Signs were posted

which read (in Greek), “No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught trespassing will bear personal responsibility for his ensuing death.” There are actually two copies of the warning notices still in existence a partial one in Jerusalem at the Israel Museum, and a second, complete version, in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum.

We do hear of Trophimus a little later in a letter. *2Ti 4:20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but* Trophimus *have I left at Miletum sick.*

Paul had been seized by an enraged mob, and the mob didn’t just want to take him out of the temple courts. They wanted to kill him, right there in the outer courtyard area of the temple mount. Paul had been near death because of the attacks of murderous mobs before (Acts 14:5, 19), and he must have thought, “Here we go again!”

News came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. From the Tower of Antonia, at the northwest corner of the temple mount, more than 500 Roman soldiers were stationed only two flights of stairs from the Court of the Gentiles.

When the people saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The Romans didn’t sympathize with Paul, but they were interested in keeping public order, so they arrested Paul both for his own protection and to remove the cause of the uproar. Two chains means Paul was handcuffed to a soldier on either side. Paul must have immediately remembered the prophecy of Agabus (Acts 21:11).

When the mob cried out for his death, Paul must have remembered when he was part of such a mob, agreeing with the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:54-8:1) or, perhaps, it even reminded him of the trial of Jesus. The shout Away with him! which pursued him as he was carried up the steps was the shout with which Jesus’ death had been demanded not far from that spot some twenty-seven years before. *Luk 23:18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: Joh 19:14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! Joh 19:15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.*

Paul Speaks to the People

Act 21:37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Act 21:38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? Act 21:39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. Act 21:40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

As Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he spoke to the commander, at first the Roman commander thought that Paul was a terrorist, and was surprised that Paul was an educated man and could speak Greek.

The language was a surprise, because both the language and phrasing showed that Paul was a man educated in the Greek world, not a rabble-rouser. The phrase itself was a surprise, it seems far too polite and reserved. We would expect Paul to be screaming, “Help, help!” and not, “Pardon me sir, may I have a moment with you?”

The Egyptian mentioned (also mentioned by the Jewish historian Josephus) led a ragged army of four thousand men to the Mount of Olives where they declared they would take over the temple mount. Roman soldiers had quickly scattered them, but the leader got away.

I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city. When Paul identified himself to the Roman commander, it put him in an entirely different standing. He was a citizen of Tarsus, not a suspected terrorist.

I implore you, permit me to speak to the people. At this moment, when his life was in danger from an angry mob and he was suspected of being a dangerous criminal, Paul had one thing on his mind: “Let me preach the gospel!”

The Roman commander bound Paul with two chains (Acts 21:33) because he suspected Paul was a troublemaker. Yet, he gave Paul permission to speak to the crowd, probably because he hoped that Paul’s speech might quiet the mob. At first, it did quiet the people down.

Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language. What a dramatic moment! Paul, standing on stairs overlooking the massive open courtyard of the temple mount, made a dramatic sweep of his hand and the angry, rioting mob fell silent. Then, Paul spoke to them in the Hebrew language, identifying himself with his Jewish audience, not with his Roman protectors.

This was an opportunity Paul had waited a lifetime for. He had an incredible passion for the salvation of his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1-5), and had probably thought of himself as uniquely qualified to effectively communicate the gospel to them, if he only had the right opportunity.

There are Similarities between Jesus and Paul as shown in Acts Chapters 20 and 21:
· Like Jesus, Paul travelled to Jerusalem with a group of disciples.
· Like Jesus, Paul had opposition from hostile Jews who plotted against his life.
· Like Jesus, Paul made or received three successive predictions of his coming sufferings in Jerusalem, including being handed over to the Gentiles.
· Like Jesus, Paul had followers who tried to discourage him from going to Jerusalem and the fate that awaited him there.
· Like Jesus, Paul declared his readiness to lay down his life.
· Like Jesus, Paul was determined to complete his ministry and not be deflected from it.
· Like Jesus, Paul expressed his abandonment to the will of God.
· Like Jesus, Paul came to Jerusalem to give something.

· Like Jesus, Paul was unjustly arrested on the basis of a false accusation.
· Like Jesus, Paul alone was arrested, but none of his companions.
· Like Jesus, Paul heard the mob crying out, Away with him!
· Like Jesus, the Roman officer handling Paul's case did not know his true identity.
· Like Jesus, Paul was associated with terrorists by a Roman official.

In a way unique to most of us, Paul really did know *the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death* (Philippians 3:10).

Paul's particular call and ministry make these similarities especially striking, but we are called to follow after Jesus also. We shouldn't be surprised when events in our lives are like events in Jesus' life. There may be a time of temptation in the wilderness, a time when people come to us with needs only God can meet, a time when we seem at the mercy of a storm, a time when we must cry out to God as in the Garden of Gethsemane, a time when we must simply lay down our lives and trust God will gloriously raise us up. We, like Paul, are *predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son* (Romans 8:29).

However, Paul's experience was obviously different in many ways, not the least of which was the manner in which he will make his defence in the next chapter, while Jesus refused to defend Himself before His accusers.

Acts Chapter 22.

We now get to hear a transcript of Paul's speech to the people, a statement of his conversion and his mission to the Gentiles.

Act 22:1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. Act 22:2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) Act 22:3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. Act 22:4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. Act 22:5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. Act 22:6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. Act 22:7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Act 22:8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. Act 22:9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. Act 22:10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. Act 22:11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. Act 22:12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report

of all the Jews which dwelt there, Act 22:13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. Act 22:14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. Act 22:15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. Act 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Act 22:17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; Act 22:18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. Act 22:19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: Act 22:20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. Act 22:21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

Paul began his great defence before the Jews the same way Stephen did, Men and brethren and fathers, listen. (Acts 7:2)

“Paul gave a magnificent defence. He actually used the word ‘defence’ (Acts 22:1). In Greek it is the word apologia, from which we get our word ‘apology.’ It refers to a formal defence of one’s past life or actions.” (Boice)

Once the wild crowd heard Paul address them in Hebrew (Aramaic), they became quiet and ready to listen.

At the end of the previous chapter, Paul’s audience for this sermon had just tried to kill him, thinking that he had profaned the temple by sneaking a Gentile in past the Court of the Gentiles.

Paul tells of his Jewish upbringing and background.

“I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.”

Paul spoke as a Jew unto Jews. He was careful to lay the common ground between them. With this, Paul began telling the story of his life before Jesus Christ and then his conversion.

Luke told the story of Paul’s conversion in Acts Chapter 9. After that, Paul told the story in some way at least four more times in the New Testament, each with its own intention.

· Acts 22: Telling the story to persuade the Jews.
· Acts 26: Telling the story to persuade the Gentiles.
· Philippians 3: Telling the story for theological understanding.
· 1 Timothy 1: Telling the story to give encouragement.

Born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, Paul noted that though he was born outside of the Promised Land, he was brought up in Jerusalem, and at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the most prestigious rabbis of the day (Acts 5:34).

As Paul stated in another place, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5). To the smallest detail, Paul kept the law as understood by the spiritual elite of his day.

Zealous toward God as you all are today, it's as if Paul searched for the nicest thing he could say about a mob that had just tried to murder him. "Well, I can say that you are zealous toward God."

Paul tells how he persecuted Christians.
"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished."

I persecuted this way to the death, this was evidence of the zeal mentioned in the previous line. Paul was so energetic as a persecutor that he, in some cases, was responsible for the death of some followers of Jesus. Paul communicated to the crowd, "You tried to kill me, but I succeeded in killing many." This had to be surprising news to many in the crowd.

Paul didn't kill every Christian he met, some were simply bound and imprisoned. But he was unsparing, persecuting women as well as men.

Paul did his work of persecution with the official approval of the religious leaders. Paul was energetic enough to carry on his campaign of persecution beyond Judea, into Syria and the city of Damascus.

The message is clear: "I understand why you have attacked me. I was once an attacker also. I understand where you are coming from." Paul had been a Christian for more than twenty years, but could still relate to those who were not Christians.

Paul describes his supernatural experience on the way to Damascus. Paul was a determined persecutor of Christians and Jesus until this heavenly light shone on him. It is as if Paul said: "I was just like you all, until I had an encounter with Jesus. Jesus met me and my life was dramatically changed."

Paul also came to understand he was persecuting Jesus Himself, the shining Lord of glory, brighter than the noonday sun. He didn't really know who he was persecuting until this. The brightness of that light made Paul blind. In persecuting Jesus he was spiritually blind, and then he was also physically blind, and had to be humbly led by the hand into the city of Damascus.

Paul describes his response to the supernatural experience in Damascus.
Paul noted that it was Ananias, a man with credentials as a good Jew who received him into the Christian family. In Paul's speech, we see that both he and Ananias both simply acted like good Jews. They did not resist God nor deny their heritage.

Paul wanted them to know that he still served the God of his fathers. He had not rejected Judaism. Instead, many in Judaism had rejected God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

This is a wonderful capsule of the duty of every one before God, to know His will, to see the Just One (Jesus), and to hear the voice of His mouth (His word).

Paul told them about something that happened about 20 years before, when he had been a follower of Jesus for 2 or 3 years. Even though he had been a Christian for a few years, yet he still came to Jerusalem to pray in the temple. He wanted the crowd to know that even though he trusted in Jesus, he was not against all Jewish ceremonies and rituals.

Paul had an impressive vision of Jesus while in the temple, yet he never referred to this vision in his letters, and seems to only mention it now out of necessity. Paul's Christian life was founded on God's truth, not spiritual experiences, and he didn't even like to talk a lot about his spiritual experiences. This word from Jesus probably was a surprise to Paul. With good reason, he probably thought of himself as the perfect one to bring the gospel to his fellow Jews. Nevertheless, Jesus gave him this warning, even telling him to make haste.

Paul answers Jesus
"So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'"

This was Paul's gentle objection to the warning Jesus just gave him in his vision. Paul's idea is, "Lord, they will listen to me. They know I used to persecute Christians, so my story will be powerful and persuasive to them." Paul thought his early, energetic persecution of the church gave him more credibility with the Jewish people who were against Christianity. He tried to explain to Jesus why he should really stay in Jerusalem and work to tell the Jewish people about Jesus.

Jesus replies to Paul's response.
Jesus didn't agree with Paul's response. Jesus knew that it was not Paul's time and place to preach to the Jewish people the way Paul wanted to. Instead, for his own safety, 20 years before this, Jesus told Paul to simply depart from Jerusalem.

When Paul was touched by God in Damascus, he was told then of his call to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), so the words from Jesus to him in the temple at Jerusalem were not new. However, we can see that in his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, it would have been easy for Paul to care so much for the conversion of Israel that he would want to concentrate on that, that's why Jesus gave him the reminder in the temple.

Paul made it clear that it wasn't his idea to preach to the Gentiles, this was God's plan, not his. He hoped it also explained to the crowd why he seemed so friendly to the Gentiles, Paul was simply obeying Jesus and His word to him.

Paul and the Roman Tribune.

Act 22:22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their

voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. Act 22:23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, Act 22:24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. Act 22:25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? Act 22:26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Act 22:27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. Act 22:28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. Act 22:29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

The crowd riots in response to Paul's message.

The crowd that had tried to kill Paul, and had then listened intently to his whole sermon, erupted into rage over the saying of one word. That one word was "Gentiles." This Jewish mob was outraged at the thought that God's salvation could be given freely to believing Gentiles.

The mob had listened carefully up to this point. In their minds, they didn't mind this talk about Jesus, but they could not stand the idea that God might save Jews and Gentiles alike and in the same way.

The message of Jesus that both Paul and the New Testament preached is this, you may come to God just as you are, Jew, Gentile, foreigner, high, low, rich, or poor, but you must come to Him through Jesus Christ.

These Jews of that day did not have a problem with Gentiles becoming Jews. But they were incredibly offended at the thought of Gentiles becoming Christians just as Jews became Christians, because it implied that Jews and Gentiles were equal, having to come to God on the same terms.

Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live! This outraged, violent response was over one word, Gentiles. The Jewish mob expressed their hatred of others through violent rage. Others express their hatred of the perishing through indifference. We may not riot like what the mob in this chapter did, but we may say much the same thing by our inaction.

Paul in Roman Custody.

Let us look at the ranks mentioned here. *Act 22:26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.* A Centurion was in charge of one hundred men, the Chief Captain was over one thousand men. This to me shows the importance of the event and indeed Paul himself.

The commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted against him. It must have been a strange sight for the Roman commander. He

saw Paul passionately address this huge crowd in a language he didn't know. He saw the crowd in rapt attention, until suddenly they exploded and erupted into a riot. But once it was explained to him, he must have thought it absurd and offensive, all this rioting springing out of the hatred of Gentiles, people just like the commander himself.

From now until the end of the Book of Acts, Paul will be in Roman custody. As far as this book is concerned, this was the end of his time as a free man, though not the end of his witness or his usefulness to God and God's people.

It is suggested that Paul be beaten with a scourge. This was quite different from being beaten with a rod or a normal whip which Paul had experienced. *2Co 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.* Men often died or were crippled for life after a scourging.

"This was not the normal Jewish flogging, which was bad enough, but the dreaded Roman flagellum. It was a beating so severe that in some cases it resulted in the death of the victim." (Boice)

This was brutal, yet customary in that time, but only upon people who were not Roman citizens.

Paul reveals his Roman citizenship.

Paul had his hands tied with leather straps so his hands joined around a wooden pole and his back was totally exposed. He was ready for a brutal beating, one that would not stop until he confessed to the crimes he was suspected of, unlike the limited Jewish beatings. At that moment Paul announced his Roman citizenship.

When this became known, the reaction was immediate. It was a serious violation of Roman rights, wrong to even bind a Roman citizen without due process, and they had already violated Paul's rights by binding him in Acts 21:33.

The commander questions Paul about his citizenship.

The penalty for lying about one's Roman citizenship was significant. It wasn't the kind of thing people commonly lied about, so the commander could simply ask Paul directly.

"The verbal claim to Roman citizenship was accepted at face value, penalties for falsifying documents and making false claims of citizenship were exceedingly stiff – Epictetus speaks of death for such acts." (Longenecker)

Because of all the commotion and the beating Paul had received, he probably looked terrible. The commander wondered how someone who looked like this could purchase his citizenship.

"Something of this sort may have been in the tribune's mind as he said, It cost me a very large sum of money to obtain Roman citizenship, the implication being that the privilege must have become cheap of late if such a sorry-looking figure as Paul could claim it." (Bruce)

According to Stott, Roman citizenship could not be bought for a fee, only for a bribe. Normally, only right or reward granted it. "The point was not that the tribune doubted Paul's claim, but rather he was implying that anybody could become a citizen these days!" (Marshall)

Paul's parents (or grandparents) must have been awarded the rights of citizenship for some good done on behalf of Rome or they had purchased it.

"How the citizenship was acquired by Paul's father or grandfather we have no means of knowing, but analogy would suggest that it was for valuable services rendered to a Roman general or administrator in the south eastern area of Asia Minor." (Bruce)

Paul was an extremely rare individual. It was uncommon to find such an educated, intelligent, devout Jew who was also a Roman citizen. God would use this unique background to use Paul in a special way, even as he wants to use your unique background to use you in a special way.

The commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him, knowing what he now knew about Paul, the commander was very concerned for his own sake.

Paul Before the Council

Act 22:30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

The Roman commander arranges a hearing of the charges against Paul before the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin).

Luke presents the Roman commander as a fair and upstanding man. Though he did not know the details of the dispute between Paul and the religious leaders, he seemed to work hard towards a fair resolution.

Paul received what he probably thought of as a dramatic second chance. The opportunity to preach to the mob on the temple mount ended in another riot, but he would speak before the Sanhedrin (their council) the next day.

The Sanhedrin was the Jewish congress or parliament. Paul would be given the opportunity to speak before the group that he was once a member of. Act 26:10 *Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.* Clearly Paul had a vote, usually only given to a member of the Sanhedrin.

God had revealed a plan to Paul right at his conversion. Paul was *a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake* (Acts 9:15-16). Paul knew the general plan, but just like us, he didn't know how it would all work out. He had to trust God, just like every believer.

Acts Chapter 23.

Act 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. Act 23:2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Act 23:3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? Act 23:4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Act 23:5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. Act 23:6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. Act 23:7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. Act 23:8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. Act 23:9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. Act 23:10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. Act 23:11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

The previous day Paul saw a great opportunity go unfulfilled when the crowd at the temple mount did not allow him to finish his message to them, but started rioting again. Now Paul had another opportunity to win Israel to Jesus, and perhaps a better opportunity. Here he spoke to the council, with the opportunity to preach Jesus to these influential men.

Men and brethren. According to William Barclay, this address meant that Paul was bold in speaking to the council, setting himself on an equal footing with them. The normal style of address was to say, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel.”

I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. Paul probably thought this was an innocent enough way to begin his preaching. He didn’t mean that he was sinlessly perfect and that his conscience had never told him he was wrong. Rather, he meant that he had responded to conscience when he had done wrong and had set things right.

Nor would Paul ever consider a clear conscience a way to be justified before God. “Paul might well appeal to the testimony of conscience as he stood before the supreme court of Israel; it was on no righteousness of his own, however, that he relied for justification in the heavenly court. The purest conscience was an insecure basis of confidence under the scrutiny of God.” (Bruce)

Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 4:4 is relevant: *For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord*.

Paul’s claim of a good conscience offended the high priest. He thought that someone accused of such serious crimes should never claim a clear conscience or, perhaps, he was convicted in his heart by the inherent integrity of Paul’s

claim. He *was* a man with a good conscience, and it was evident in his speech and countenance.

No matter what his motive was, "This order was illegal, for the Jewish law said, 'He who strikes the cheek of one Israelite, strikes as it were the glory of God,' and 'He that strikes a man strikes the Holy One.'" (Hughes)

The Ananias who was high priest at this time did no honour to the office. He was well known for his greed, the ancient Jewish historian Josephus tells of how Ananias stole for himself the tithes that belonged to the common priests.

"He did not scruple to use violence and assassination to further his interests" (Bruce). Later, because of his pro-Roman politics, Ananias was brutally killed by Jewish nationalists.

Paul's response to the punch in the face.

Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

We wish we knew how Paul said these words. It would have helped to hear Paul's tone of voice; was it an outburst of anger, or was it a calm, collected rebuke with that much more weight to it? Whatever the tone, the rebuke was entirely accurate and justified. The man who commanded that a defenceless man be punched in the face indeed was a whitewashed wall, a white veneer of purity covering over obvious corruption.

For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law? Paul exposed the hypocrisy of the man who made the command.

The men of the council were supposed to be examples of the Law of Moses. The command to have Paul struck was in fact contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the law. Deuteronomy 25:1-2 says only a man found guilty can be beaten, and Paul had not yet been found guilty of anything.

God will strike you. "Paul's words, however, were more prophetic than he realized. Ananias' final days, despite all his scheming and bribes, were lived as a hunted animal and ended at the hands of his own people." (Longenecker)

Those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest**?"** Paul instantly knew that he was wrong in his outburst, no matter how he said it. He agreed that it was wrong to speak evil of the ruler of your people (Exodus 22:28). Yet Paul excused himself, claiming that he did not know that the man who commanded the punch was Ananias, the high priest.

This isn't unreasonable, since Paul had been away from the council and the high circles of Jewish authority in Jerusalem for more than 20 years. Probably, he simply didn't recognize the man who gave the command to strike him as the high priest. However, some think he did not know because Paul's eyesight was bad. This is an inference from Galatians 4:14-15 and 6:11, as well as from early

written church traditions, others think that Paul was sarcastic, with the idea “I didn’t think that anyone who acted in such a manner could be the high priest.”

Paul’s clever ploy.
But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!”

Paul perceived. Paul seems to have read his audience and saw they were not conducive to the gospel, the actions of the high priest and the attitudes of those present made this plain. So, Paul gave up on preaching the gospel, and did what he could to preserve his liberty before a council that wanted to kill him.

One part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees. Paul’s course was to divide the Sanhedrin among their party lines, to make one side (the Pharisees) sympathetic to him, instead of having them united against him.

I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. Knowing his audience, Paul referred to his heritage as a Pharisee, and declared, “concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged.” He knew this was a matter of great controversy between the two parties.

Of course, this was an essentially true claim. The centre of Paul’s gospel was a resurrected Jesus. He was being judged over the matter of the resurrection of the dead.

The council is divided.
And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection and no angel or spirit, but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose and protested, saying, “We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”

Paul picked the right issue. Framed in these terms, he immediately gained the Pharisees as an ally, and he let them argue it out with the Sadducees.

Sadducees were the theological liberals of their day, and denied the reality of life after death and the concept of resurrection. Luke rightly wrote of them, Sadducees say that there is no resurrection; and no angel or spirit.

The Pharisees were more likely to find some grounds of agreement with Paul, being the more the Bible believers in the Jewish world of that time. They took the Bible seriously, even if they did err greatly by adding the traditions of men to what they received in the Bible.

Usually the Sadducees and the Pharisees were bitter enemies, but they were able to unite in opposition against Jesus (Matthew 16:1, John 11:47-53) and Paul. It’s strange how people with nothing in common will come together as friends to oppose God or His work.

Let us not fight against God. In saying this, the Pharisees recommended a return to advice of their great leader Gamaliel as recorded in Acts 5:38-39.

Paul is rescued by the Roman commander.
Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

The commander had to be certain that these Jews were crazy in their endless and violent disputes. Previously, they rioted over the one word “Gentiles,” now the distinguished men of the council fought over the one word “resurrection.”The commander removed Paul for his own safety, and left him in custody in the barracks.

Paul’s clever ploy rescued him from the council, but he could not have been happy with the result. He had the opportunity to preach to a huge crowd of attentive Jews on the temple mount and it ended in failure. Then he had the opportunity to preach to the influential Jewish council, and it also ended in a fight.

Jesus comforts Paul in the night.
But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”

This must have been a difficult night for Paul. His heart longed for the salvation of his fellow Jews (Romans 9:1-4), and two great opportunities came to nothing. It would be no surprise if Paul blamed himself for the missed opportunity before the Sanhedrin. It could be said that his reaction to the punch commanded by the High Priest spoiled everything.

Paul mourned these lost opportunities for God and how he might have spoiled them. At moments like these, one is often tormented with a deep sense of unworthiness and un-useableness before God.

It was in the darkness of that night that Jesus came to Paul and stood by him. Jesus’ physical presence (as it seems was the case) with Paul was a unique manifestation. But Jesus promised every believer to always be with them (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus knew where Paul was, He had not lost sight of Paul because he was in jail. When John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim’s Progress, was in jail, a man visited him and said, “Friend, the Lord sent me to you, and I have been looking in half the prisons in England for you.” John Bunyan replied, “I don’t think the Lord sent you to me, because if He had, you would have come here first. God knows I have been here for years.” God knows where you are today; even if you are hiding it from everyone else, God knows where you are.

Paul had been miraculously delivered from jail cells before, but this time, the Lord met him right in the jail cell. We often demand that Jesus deliver us out of our circumstances, when He wants to meet us right in them. We sometimes think we are surrendering to Jesus when we are really only demanding an escape. God wants to meet us in whatever we face at the moment.

Jesus was not only with Paul, He gave him words of comfort. The words be of good cheer tell us that the night brought with it an emotional and perhaps spiritual darkness upon Paul. Jesus was there to cheer His faithful servant after he had spent himself for Jesus' sake.

Jesus would not have said be of good cheer unless Paul needed to hear those words. Paul knew his situation was bad, but he didn't know the half of it! The next day, forty Jewish assassins would gather together and vow to go on a hunger strike until they murdered Paul. Paul didn't know this would happen, but Jesus did.

You might think that things are bad right now, but you may not even know the half of it. But Jesus knows, and He still says to you, be of good cheer. Why? Not because everything is fine, but because God is still on His throne, and He still holds to His promise that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

Anyone can be cheerful when everything is great, but the Christian can be of good cheer when everything is rotten, knowing that God is mighty and wonderful no matter what the crisis of the moment.

Be of good cheer is only one word in the ancient Greek, and is used five times in the New Testament, each time by Jesus.
· Jesus told the bedridden paralytic, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you (Matthew 9:2).
· Jesus told the woman with the 12-year bleeding problem, Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well (Matthew 9:22).
· Jesus told His frightened disciples on the Sea of Galilee, Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid (Matthew 14:27).
· Jesus told His disciples the night before His crucifixion, In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

And here, in Acts Jesus returns to Paul, be of good cheer. For as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome. Jesus remembered what Paul had done in Jerusalem, and told Paul that there remained more work for him to do in Rome.

Paul could have been discouraged about the lack of results from the sermon in Jerusalem. But the results were not his responsibility. His responsibility was to bring the Word of God and to testify of Jesus, the results were God's responsibility. You have testified for Me in Jerusalem means that Jesus complimented Paul on a job well done.

Yet, though Paul had done a good job, there was more to do. Rome was Paul's next assignment. The greatest words a faithful child of God can hear are "There is more for you to do." Those words grieve the lazy servant, but bring joy to a faithful servant.

It can be said to every child of God, there is more for you to do. More people to bring to Christ, more ways for you to glorify Him, more people to pray with, more humble ways to serve His people, more hungry to feed, more naked to clothe, more weary saints for you to encourage.

“A divine decree ordains for you greater and more trying service than as yet you have seen. A future awaits you, and no power on the earth or under the earth can rob you of it; therefore be of good cheer.” (Spurgeon)

The promise of more work to do was also a promise of continued protection. Paul had to live until he had finished the course God had appointed for him.

Paul really wanted to go on to Rome *Act 19:21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome*. (and Romans 1:9-12).

Sometimes we think that just because we want something a lot, it couldn’t be God’s will for us. But God often gives us the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4).

The timing of this promise was especially precious. It didn’t look like Paul would get out of Jerusalem alive, much less make it to Rome. God not only knows what we need to hear, He knows when we need to hear it.

Paul faced his enemies the next day with renewed strength, knowing that they were powerless against him, because God had more for him to do!

“This assurance meant much to Paul during the delays and anxieties of the next two years, and goes far to account for the calm and dignified bearing which from now on marks him out as a master of events rather than their victim.” (Bruce)

Resurrection.

We saw how Paul was accused of bringing the Jewish laws down. That accusation was brought by the Jewish Christians, but Paul goes out of his way to show that he is not doing this. This in no way sanctions the keeping of Mosaic Law for Gentile Christians, it merely allows cultural continuity for the Jews.

However the real cause of the dispute with the Jews is brought out here in verse 6. It is Paul’s belief in the resurrection. *Act 23:6 But when Paul saw that the one part were Sadducees and the other part Pharisees, he cried out in the sanhedrin, Men! Brothers! I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee! I am being judged because of the hope and resurrection of the dead*.

We need to understand the implications of the resurrection.

This teaching is the distinctive of the Christian religion. Nothing like it exists in other religious creeds.

It is true other religions have vague beliefs in immortality, but no religion ever hints that its leader in point of time, on this earth came forth from the tomb in a resurrection body.

It is not the historicity of Jesus as a man that comes under attack. No one in the New Testament doubts that He was a real person. It is the resurrection that is under attack. Resurrection is the lynchpin of our faith as I hope to demonstrate. It was under attack in the early church here and it is still under attack today.

At Easter some Church of England vicars denied the literal bodily resurrection. This shows how deceitful and divided the Church of England has become, because it denies its own creeds.

The Articles of the Church of England, the 39 Articles (originally 42 in Edward 7th's time) are accepted by Ordinands to ministry of the Church of England. They swear to uphold these Articles of Faith or at least to consent to the general sense of the Articles.

Article 4 states on the resurrection of Christ that "Christ did truly rise again from death and took again His body with flesh, bones and all things pertaining to the perfection of mans nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and there sitteth until He return to judge all men at the last day".

The Church of England's morning service contains the Apostles Creed, here it is again affirmed that Jesus "was crucified, dead and buried, He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven", and later "I believe in the ... the resurrection of the body..."

They or many of them say what they don't believe. The Bible says a double minded man is unstable in all his ways, he is good for nothing.

Providentially the subject of the Heidelberg Catechism for Lord's Day 22 is the resurrection. Here the catechism is running through the Apostles Creed. Question 57 and Question 58.

Why though is the resurrection essential to our faith?

Reasons:

1. It confirms the truth of Christ's words. The third day He would live. *Mar 9:31 For He taught His disciples and said to them, The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him. And after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. If this is true how can you doubt the rest of His words? Joh 14:19 Yet a little while and the world does not see Me any more. But you see Me. Because I live, you shall live also.*
2. It affirms His essential natures, human and Divine, in one person. *Rom 1:4 who was marked out the Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;* Sonship is confirmed not in birth but in resurrection. Without resurrection Jesus was just any man, guru, fanatic, leader who died in His quest. Son of God is a statement of Divinity. *Joh 5:18 Then, because of this, the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but also said that God was His father, making Himself equal with God.*
3. It enables righteousness to be imputed to us. *Rom 4:25 who was delivered because of our offenses and was raised for our justification.* He could

indeed die for sin, which offers no assurance for my life afterwards. I would be thrown back on my fallible self.

4. It further enables my walk. *Rom 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life. Rom 6:5 For if we have been joined together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection; Rom 6:11 Likewise count yourselves also to be truly dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Rom 6:13 Do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God, as one alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Eph 1:18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, Eph 1:19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us, the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength Eph 1:20 which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death; Php 3:11 if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead. Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,* Resurrection is essential for sanctification.
5. Christ must live so that He can send the Holy Spirit. *Joh 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My Word. And My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.* God indwelled by the Spirit. *Rom 8:11 But if the Spirit of the One who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the One who raised up Christ from the dead shall also make your mortal bodies alive by His Spirit who dwells in you.*
6. It gives us hope of our own resurrection. *1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has regenerated us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1Pe 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and unfading, reserved in Heaven for you 2Co 4:14 knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise us up by Jesus, and shall present us with you. 1Co 15:20 But now Christ has risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruit of those who slept. 1Co 15:21 For since death is through man, the resurrection of the dead also is through a Man.*

So then if you deny the resurrection, the literal bodily resurrection the implications are as follows:

- You cannot believe in the Gospel. It is an article of faith. *Rom 4:23 Now it was not written for him alone that it was imputed to him,*
- You do not acknowledge Christ as God.
- You cannot trust any of Christ's words.
- We remain unrighteous.
- We have no hope of eternal life.

- Practical holiness is impossible.

How are we raised?

1Co 15:35 But someone will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? 1Co 15:36 Foolish one! What you sow is not made alive unless it dies. 1Co 15:37 And what you sow, you do not sow the body that is going to be, but a bare grain (perhaps of wheat or of some of the rest). 1Co 15:38 And God gives it a body as it has pleased Him, and to each of the seeds its own body. 1Co 15:39 All flesh is not the same flesh; but one kind of flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another of fish, and another of birds. 1Co 15:40 There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the glory of the heavenly is truly different, and that of the earthly different; 1Co 15:41 one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. 1Co 15:42 So also the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; 1Co 15:43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 1Co 15:44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 1Co 15:45 And so it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul," the last Adam was a life-giving Spirit. 1Co 15:46 But not the spiritual first, but the natural; afterward the spiritual. 1Co 15:47 The first man was out of earth, earthy; the second Man was the Lord from Heaven. 1Co 15:48 Such the earthy man, such also the earthy ones. And such the heavenly Man, such also the heavenly ones. 1Co 15:49 And according as we bore the image of the earthy man, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. 1Co 15:50 And I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

How is the body reconstituted?

It is not, that which is sown is not that which is reaped. It is a spiritual body.

Paul is Delivered from the Plot of Assassins.

A Plot to Kill Paul

Act 23:12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Act 23:13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. Act 23:14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Act 23:15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. Act 23:16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. Act 23:17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. Act 23:18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. Act 23:19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? Act

23:20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. Act 23:21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. Act 23:22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

In the days of Paul and Jesus, there was a secretive group of Jewish assassins who targeted the Romans and their supporters. They were dagger-men, because they often concealed daggers and stabbed Roman soldiers as they walked by. It seems that these same kind of assassins now targeted Paul.

They were so zealous that they made a vow to not eat or even drink until Paul was dead. This was a high level of commitment.

These men lacked nothing in commitment or zeal. But their zeal was not according to knowledge (Romans 10:2). Zeal and devotion by themselves never prove that someone is right with God.

The assassins wanted the chief priests and elders to lie to the Roman commander, pretending they wanted another meeting with Paul.

Their lie was a sin, and men who should have been committed to the law of God were instead happy to sin against Him. They were zealous, but still willing to lie and sin to accomplish their supposedly godly goals.

So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. It was no accident that this happened. God had to protect Paul because Jesus promised that he would go to Rome to testify of Him (Acts 23:11).

Paul had committed no crime, yet he was a prisoner. Because the Roman commander suspected he might be a revolutionary of some kind, Paul had to be kept in custody until the facts of the case could be discovered.

Paul Sent to Felix the Governor

Act 23:23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; Act 23:24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. Act 23:25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: Act 23:26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. Act 23:27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. Act 23:28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: Act 23:29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. Act 23:30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers

also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell. Act 23:31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. Act 23:32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: Act 23:33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. Act 23:34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; Act 23:35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

Paul escapes to Caesarea, with a full military escort and a letter referring his case to the provincial governor. 470 trained Roman soldiers would escort Paul out of Jerusalem. It was as if God wanted to exaggerate His faithfulness to Paul, and show him beyond any doubt that the promise of Jesus was true.

Not only did Paul escape Jerusalem alive, he did so riding a horse, actually, several mounts were made available to Paul.

The letter from Lysias to Felix.
In his letter, Lysias implied that he learned of Paul's Roman citizenship right away, and he said nothing of the way Paul was bound twice and almost scourged for the sake of interrogation. He had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. For Luke, this was the important line in the letter. Luke showed that other Roman officials had judged Paul "not guilty."

"One of Luke's prime motives in writing his twofold history is to demonstrate that there is no substance in this charge of subversion brought not only against Paul but against Christians in general and that competent and impartial judges had repeatedly confirmed the innocence of the Christian movement and the Christian missionaries in respect of Roman law." (Bruce)

Paul arrives in Caesarea.

The 200 soldiers only went as far as Antipatris because the most dangerous part of the road was only up to this point. The New Testament site of Antipatris was known as Aphek in Old Testament times. It is the place where the Philistines were encamped when they took the Ark of the Covenant from the Israelites who had camped at nearby Ebenezer (1 Samuel 4:1). Antipatris was built by Herod the Great and named in honour of his father Antipater.

"Up to Antipatris [about 25 miles] the country was dangerous and inhabited by Jews, after that the country was open and flat, quite unsuited for any ambush and largely inhabited by Gentiles." (Barclay)

Paul made it out of Jerusalem and to Caesarea on the coast. The plot of the 40 assassins failed.

Some wonder if the men who made the vow of fasting died because they failed in their mission to kill Paul. This was probably not the case. Ancient rabbis allowed for four types of vows to be broken, "Vows of incitement, vows of

exaggeration, vows made in error, and vows that cannot be fulfilled by reason of constraint" – exclusions allowing for almost any contingency. (Longenecker)

When he understood that he was from Cilicia, perhaps Felix hoped that Paul came from someplace that required that someone else hear his case. Apparently, learning that he was from Cilicia meant that Felix would indeed be responsible to hear and rule on his case.

This would be Paul's first opportunity to speak to someone at this level of authority (the governor). This was the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise made to Paul some 20 years earlier, that he would bear the name of Jesus to kings (Acts 9:15).

Felix commanded him to be kept in Herod's Judgement hall or Praetorium. This began a two-year period of confinement for Paul in Caesarea. After that he spent at least two years in Rome. Taken together with travel time, the next five years of Paul's life were lived in Roman custody. This was a striking contrast to his previous years of wide and spontaneous travel.

Note here another similarity with Jesus. *Joh 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.*

A Praetorium in Roman history refers to the headquarters or residence of a high-ranking official, like a general or governor, evolving from a commander's tent in a military camp to a luxurious official palace or villa, often featuring impressive amenities, and also named the central location where the Emperor's elite Praetorian Guard served. It signifies power, status, and official administration

Paul lived many years with great freedom, and had to trust the promises of God through those years. Yet he also had to trust the promises of Jesus in his years of little freedom and to know that God could work just as powerfully through those more difficult circumstances.

Paul needed to receive the promise of Jesus, both promises from 20 years before, and promises recently made, to receive them with confident faith, allowing those promises to make a difference in how he thought and even felt. Every believer must do the same.

Acts Chapter 24.

Paul Before Felix at Caesarea

Act 24:1And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. Act 24:2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, Act 24:3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Act 24:4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. Act 24:5 For we have found

this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: Act 24:6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. Act 24:7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, Act 24:8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. Act 24:9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so. Act 24:10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: Act 24:11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. Act 24:12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: Act 24:13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. Act 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: Act 24:15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. Act 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. Act 24:17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Act 24:18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Act 24:19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. Act 24:20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, Act 24:21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

We left Paul a prisoner at Caesarea, in Herod's judgment-hall, expecting his trial to come on quickly, because at the beginning of his imprisonment his affairs moved very quickly, but afterwards very slowly.

In this chapter we have his arraignment and trial before Felix the governor at Caesarea, here is,

- The appearing of the prosecutors against him, and the setting of the prisoner to the bar (v. 1, 2).
- The opening of the indictment against him by Tertullus, who was of counsel for the prosecutors, and the aggravating of the charge, with abundance of compliments to the judge, and malice to the prisoner (v. 2-8).
- The corroborating of the charge by the testimony of the witnesses, or rather the prosecutors themselves (v. 9).
- The prisoner's defence, in which, with all due deference to the governor (v. 10), he denies the charge, and challenges them to prove it (v. 11-13), owns the truth, and makes an unexceptionable profession of his faith,

which he declares was it that they hated him for (v. 14-16), and gives a more particular account of what had passed from their first seizing him, challenging them to specify any ill they had found in him (v. 17-21).

- The adjourning of the cause, and the continuing of the prisoner in custody (v. 22, 23).

- The private conversation that was between the prisoner and the judge, by which the prisoner hoped to do good to the judge and the judge thought to get money by the prisoner, but both in vain (v. 24-26).

- The lengthening out of Paul's imprisonment for two years, till another governor came (v. 27), where he seems as much neglected as there had been ado about him.

Tertullus introduces his accusation against Paul with flattery towards Felix.

Most noble Felix, Antonius Felix began life as a slave. His brother Pallas was a friend of the Emperor Claudius; through such influence, he rose in status, first as a child gaining freedom, and then through intrigue he became the first former slave to become a governor of a Roman province. Felix is not the “Christian” name of this character it is his family name. His full name is apparently Marcus Antonius Felix.

But his slave mentality stayed with him. Tacitus, the Roman historian, described Felix as “a master of cruelty and lust who exercised the powers of a king with the spirit of a slave” (*Historiae* 5.9, cited in Longnecker).

“The picture drawn by Tacitus of Felix’s public and private life is not a pretty one. Trading on the influences of his infamous brother [Pallas, a favourite of the emperor Claudius], he indulged in every license and excess, thinking ‘that he could do any evil act with impunity’ (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.54).” (Williams)

Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, these were lies presented as flattery. Felix did not bring peace or prosperity to those he governed.

“In reality he [Felix] had put down several insurrections with such barbarous brutality that he earned for himself the horror, not the thanks, of the Jewish population.” (Stott) In particular, he ordered a massacre of thousands of Jews in Caesarea, with many more Jewish homes looted by the Roman soldiers.

Flattery is an often-neglected sin, one that the Bible speaks about more often than one might think. Romans 16:18 speaks to us of those who *do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple*. Jude 1:16 speaks of those who *mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.*

Four different times the Book of Proverbs connects flattery with the sin of sexual immorality. Many people have been seduced into immorality through simple flattery.

Proverbs 20:19 says, *He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips*. This means that we aren't to make flatterers our close friends.

Psalm 78:36 says we can even flatter God: *Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongue*. When you give God insincere praise, it is flattery, and God doesn't want it.

"I suppose that even Felix was shrewd enough to have listened with tongue in cheek. What is it that these Jewish leaders are after that they should come all the way from Caesarea and flatter me in this fashion? he must have wondered." (Boice)

Paul's accusers state their specific charges.

"For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law."

The charges against Paul were essentially that he was politically dangerous (a plague… a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes) and that he had profaned the temple.

Ancient Judea was filled with would-be messiahs and revolutionaries against Rome. Tertullus wanted to put Paul in the same group with these kinds of terrorists.

The reference to Paul being a Nazarene was intended to connect him to a generally despised and lowly place. It was a term of slight scorn used for the followers of Jesus. Nazareth had a poor reputation as a city (John 1:46). Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Among all Jews throughout the world. Here, Tertullus gave an unintended compliment as he described the extent of Paul's work in the Roman Empire. He even tried to profane the temple. This was the only really specific charge against Paul, but Tertullus gave no evidence for this charge because there *was* no evidence. This was a fabricated charge based on rumour only (Acts 21:26-29).

Paul had nothing to fear from the truth, but he knew that the truth does not always win out in a court of law.

Significantly, the same man who found it so easy to flatter also found it easy to accuse with no evidence. The two almost always go together, the person who flatters today will likely accuse tomorrow without evidence.

Tertullus concludes his accusation against Paul.

The commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands. The Roman commander Lysias, who rescued Paul, was put in a bad light. Clearly Paul's accusers regretted that the case had come this far, having preferred to settle it with mob justice.

By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him. Tertullus did not even pretend to offer outside evidence of the charges. His only hope was that Paul would incriminate himself under examination by Felix.

"His oration has been blamed as *weak, lame,* and *imperfect*; and yet, perhaps, few, with so *bad a cause*, could have made *better* of it." (Clarke)

The other Jewish accusers present (the high priest and the elders) agreed with the charges, but they also offered no supporting evidence.

Paul's Defence.

Paul exposes the weakness of the case against him. Paul was happy to answer for himself, knowing that the facts of the case were in his favour and notably, used no flattery in his address to Felix. Even though it had been no more than twelve days, and many witnesses could be easily found, Paul's accusers gave no witnesses to prove that he was in fact in the temple disputing or inciting the crowd. There was simply no proof for their accusations.

Paul then explains his ministry, and why he was arrested.

According to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, Paul made it clear that he had not abandoned the God of my fathers or the Law and the Prophets. Instead, he acted in fulfilment of them both.

Tertullus called Christianity the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) Paul called it the Way.

That there will be a resurrection of the dead, this was believed by many or most devout Jews of Paul's day, though not by the Sadducees (Acts 23:8). Paul's belief that there will be a resurrection was connected to his specific trust in the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul clearly believed in a resurrection for both the righteous and the unrighteous. The idea of soul-sleep or annihilation for the unrighteous is not accurate according to New Testament teaching.

I came to bring alms and offerings. This refers to the collection Paul made for Judean Christians among the Gentile churches of the West (Galatians 2:10, Romans 15:26, and 2 Corinthians 8-9).

They ought to have been here before you to object. In this, Paul reminded Felix that there was no eyewitness testimony to prove the charges of his accusers.

"This was a strong point in his defence, the people who had raised the hue and cry in the first instance, claiming to be eyewitnesses of his alleged sacrilege, had

not troubled to be present." (Bruce) Because Paul was in the right, he consistently called the case back to the evidence, the very thing his accusers avoided.

Christians should never be timid about or ashamed of the truth or of the evidence. If we are truly following God, the truth and evidence are our friends, not our accusers.

Paul Kept in Custody

Act 24:22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. Act 24:23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. Act 24:24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Act 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. Act 24:26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. Act 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Felix's Decision in the Case.

Felix avoided a legal decision under the pretence of waiting for more evidence through the Roman Commander Lysias. But Felix clearly had enough evidence to make a decision in Paul's favour (having more accurate knowledge of the Way).

Knowing Paul's innocence, he granted Paul generous liberty even while he was held in custody.

Felix tried to walk a middle ground. He knew Paul was innocent, yet he did not want to identify himself with Paul's gospel and the Christians. So he made no decision and kept Paul in custody.

Felix also avoids making a spiritual decision.
Felix wanted his wife to hear Paul's testimony, either as a curiosity or so that she could advise him. After all, he claimed to have insufficient evidence for a decision. Despite his lowly origins, he was remarkably successful in marriage (from a social point of view, that is), his three successive wives were all of royal birth, according to Suetonius. The first of the three was a grand-daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, the third was Drusilla, youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. Drusilla was beautiful, ambitious, and about 20 years old at this point. Felix seduced her away from her husband and made her his third wife.

"The lax morals of Felix and Drusilla help to explain the topics on which Paul spoke to them." (Stott)

Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. These were the three points Paul used when he spoke to Felix and Drusilla. These are three points many modern preachers would avoid speaking about, especially in speaking to a high figure like Felix.

We don't know exactly how Paul developed these three points, but we can speculate on something like this:

· The righteousness that is ours in Jesus Christ.
· The need for Christian ethics (self-control) that was evidently lacking in the life of both Felix and Drusilla.
· Eternal accountability before God (the judgment to come).

We can admire Paul's bold preaching, directed right to the issues of Felix's life. Spurgeon says "Are there not some to be found, who think the highest object of the minister is to attract the multitude and then to please them? O my God! how solemnly ought each of us to bewail our sin, if we feel we have been guilty in this matter. What is it to have pleased men? Is there aught in it that can make our head lie easy on the pillow of our death? Is there aught in it that can give us boldness in the day of judgment when we face thy tribunal, O Judge of quick and dead? No, my brethren, we must always take our texts so that we may bear upon our hearers with all our might."

"But some men will say, 'Sir, ministers ought not to be personal.' Ministers ought to be personal, and they will never be true to their Master till they are…But now we poor craven sons of nobodies have to stand and talk about generalities; but we are afraid to point you out and tell you of your sins personally. But, blessed be God, from that fear I have been delivered long ago. There walketh not a man on the surface of this earth whom I dare not reprove."

Felix was afraid. Hearing this message made Felix afraid. Knowing something about his life, at least we can say that he probably understood it. The gospel should make those who are intent on rejecting Jesus afraid.

Go away for now, when I have a convenient time I will call for you. However, Felix was unwilling to declare his decision against Jesus. Instead, he rejected Jesus under the pretence of delaying his decision.

Many respond to the gospel in this way; they express their rejection through delay, by delaying their decision to commit to Jesus Christ, but it is rejection none the less. The Bible tells us to come to Jesus in repentance and faith today: *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation* (2 Corinthians 6:2).

It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe. "Thou sayest, 'Another time.' How knowest thou that thou wilt ever feel again as thou feelest now? This morning, perhaps a voice is saying in thy heart, 'Prepare to meet thy God.' Tomorrow that voice will be hushed. The gaieties of the ball-room and the theatre will put out that voice that warns thee now, and perhaps thou wilt never hear it again. Men all have their warnings, and all men who perish have had a *last warning*. Perhaps this is your last warning." (Spurgeon)

Again from Spurgeon, "God to-day is pulling the reigns tight to check you from your lust; perhaps, if to-day you spurn the bit, and rush madly on, he will throw the reigns upon your back, saying, 'Let him alone;' and then it is a dark steeple-

chase between hell and earth, and you will run it in mad confusion, never thinking of a hell till you find yourself past warning, past repentance, past faith, past hope."

The claims of Jesus are never convenient for us. If we insist on waiting for a convenient time, we will wait for an eternity, an eternity spent in agonizing separation from God.

The motive of Felix's heart is revealed as greed.
Though Felix met often with Paul, it was not honest seeking. He hoped to be paid off with a bribe.

Under Roman law, the type of custody Paul was in could only last two years. Felix showed that he was willing to break Roman laws by keeping Paul for more than two years. Felix refused to release Paul, though he knew that he was innocent. He did this for the same reason Pilate condemned Jesus while knowing His innocence. They both acted out of pure political advantage (wanting to do the Jews a favour).

In a way, people like Felix and Pilate are the guiltiest of those who reject Jesus Christ. They know what is right but refuse to do right purely out of the fear of man. They have an eternally fatal lack of courage.

Evangelism.

Act 24:24Then after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Act 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and the Judgment to come, Felix trembled and answered, Go for this time, but taking time later, I will call for you. Act 24:26 He also hoped that silver would be given him by Paul, that he might free him. Therefore he also frequently sent for him and talked with him. Act 24:27 But after two years Felix welcomed a successor, Porcius Festus. And wishing to show a favor to the Jews, Felix left Paul bound.

Felix is the Roman Governor of Judea (his name means happy). In truth he was a corrupt man, a man who will use his position for self gain. When Paul is brought before him, he hopes that Paul will try to buy his release. He actually summons Paul all the more often because he thinks that he will make some money.

Whatever Felix' motives, Paul has but one aim and that is to put the claims of Christ to whoever will listen to him. Incidentally, you never find that the book of Acts contains any trivial conversation. You don't find a record of Paul talking about camel racing, holidays, Roman games or politics. I am not saying that he didn't, but there is no record of it. Clearly the Bible is the record of what is really important and that is the work of our Saviour Jesus and how we can best convey the good news. We often have worldly friends who are a drain on our Christianity! Do people dictate your preaching or stop you from speaking?

What I want to draw your attention to is "target" preaching. This is where you preach to the needs or condition of an individual.

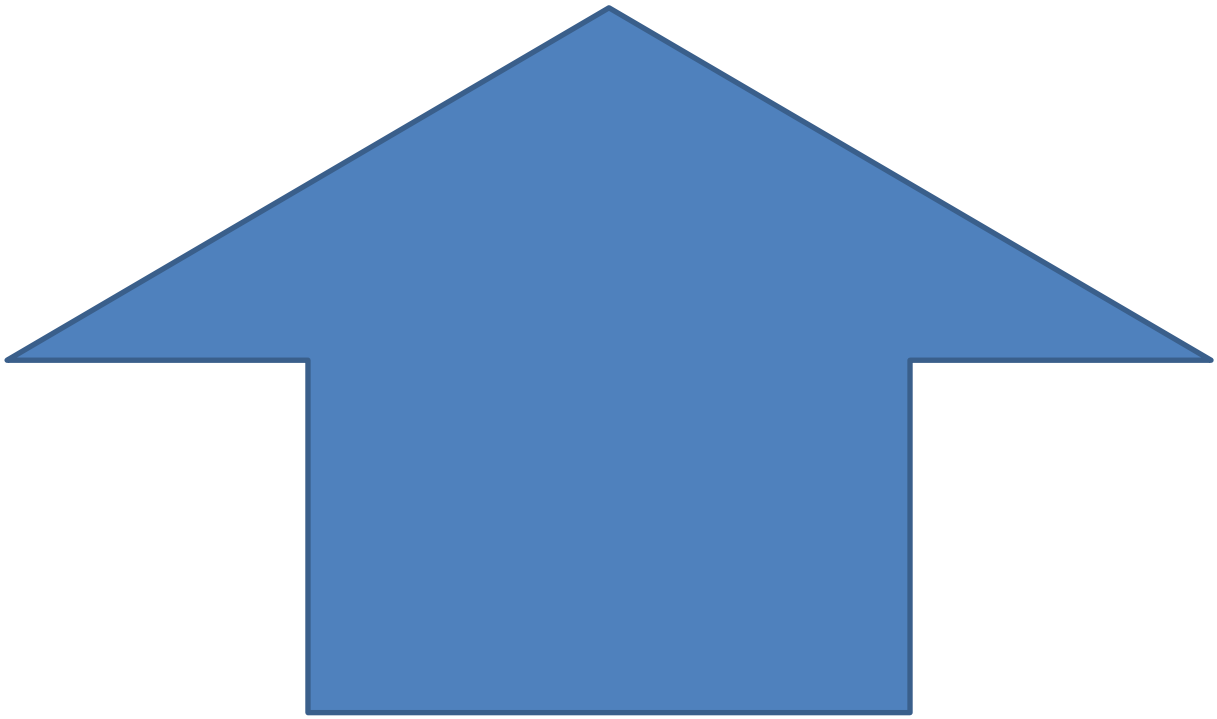
We have seen already how Paul speaks quite pointedly, with relevance to his audience. He does a bit of background research, he weights up the people and he talks to them in a relevant manner. William Grenfell when speaking to the Eskimos about hell did not get the response of terror. They thought hell was wonderful because it was always warm. Grenfell in order to show the discomfort then used the analogy of eternal coldness. He made the teaching relevant to his audience.

So with Felix, what is Paul's subject? It is righteousness, temperance and the judgement to come. This corrupt official needs to be shown that he cannot play fast and loose in the sight of God.

Clearly Paul has found his target because the man Felix begins to fear. The point gets home.

What an amazing contrast this is to the responses of the jailor at Philippi. How can a man come so close to seeking relief in Christ and then send the messenger away?

Why is this? Lets us look at the process of evangelism.



So then there is a hardening against God for some and a softening in others. You will see this in converted people, they will not be soft in the world's sense of the word, but they will be soft in God's hands. They will yield to the word of God. They will be moulded by it. That is the mark of a true Christian. It is the definition of a Christian.

Now to you evangelists, I want to give a word of encouragement. I know that most of all you want to see people saved and at peace with God, but it is God's work none the less. *1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*

You may think that you fail when men like Felix send you away with fear and promises. You have not failed, you are watching the working of God.

So:

- Rejoice in His plan.
- Submit to His purpose.
- Worship His sovereignty.

But above all expect to see an effect. One way or another you will see something. If nothing happens go away and reflect on your method!

Now it is not falling into conviction as Felix does that fixes your state before God, it is how you get out! Not how you are wounded, but how you are healed.

Felix seeks no healing, only quenching of his conscience. He is pricked but not so much that he cries for salvation. What an arrogant man he is! What a presumptuous man. “When I have time, opportunity I will send for you again”. Have you said that? Did you think that you could put off any matter of duty until tomorrow? Too late, the man on his death bed.

The gospel has no tomorrow, only today. *Heb 4:7 He again marks out a certain day, saying in David, "Today," (after so long a time). Even as it is said, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."* You have no certainty beyond this minute, so you must act now, God expects it of you.

The jailor saw that his life was accelerating rapidly down the tubes. With the sword on his breast he knew that there could be no tomorrow in his present state. *Act 16:30 And leading them outside, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* He cries and he is heard.

Never ever presume that you have a tomorrow and never face the tomorrows of this life without Christ today!

Acts Chapter 25.

Paul Appeals to Caesar

Act 25:1Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Act 25:2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, Act 25:3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. Act 25:4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Act 25:5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. Act 25:6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next

day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. Act 25:7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. Act 25:8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. Act 25:9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Act 25:10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. Act 25:11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Act 25:12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

Three days after Festus becomes Governor he has the case of Paul bought to his attention, this was the most important issue for the Jews.

What do we know about Festus?

Marcus Antonius Felix is gone his successor Porcius Festus in now in power, he finds he is in control of a sorry mess.

Of Porcius Festus' life prior to his appointment to Antonius Felix' vacant procurator ship nothing is known. History describes him as fair and reasonable, much more so than Felix or Festus' successor, Albinus.

Josephus had favourable things to say about Porcius Festus. He recorded that at the time Festus took his position, Sicarii bandits were roaming the countryside, plundering and burning villages. They also mingled into crowds of worshipers and killed people with short, curved swords. Festus learned an imposter had gone to the Sicarii, promising them deliverance from their hardships. The imposter led the bandits to the wilderness where Festus' forces killed the imposter and his followers.

The exact time of Festus in office is not known. The earliest proposed date for the start of his term is c. A.D. 55–6, while the latest is A.D. 61. These extremes have not gained much support and most scholars opt for a date between 58 and 60. F. F. Bruce says that, "The date of his [Felix's] recall and replacement by Porcius Festus is disputed, but a change in the provincial coinage of Judaea attested for Nero's fifth year points to A.D. 59".

We can clearly see here unfolding the events that lead to The First Jewish–Roman War (66–73 CE), sometimes called the Great Jewish Revolt, or The Jewish War, was the first of three major rebellions by the Jews against the Roman Empire, fought in Roman-controlled Judea, resulting in the destruction of Jewish towns, the displacement of its people and the appropriation of land for Roman military use, as well as the destruction of the Jewish Temple and Civil Government.

Festus was governor for only two or three years before he died. He was succeeded by Albinus.

Festus inherited the problems of his predecessor in regard to the Roman practice of creating civic privileges for Jews. Another issue that bedevilled his administration was the controversy between Agrippa II and the priests in Jerusalem regarding the wall erected at the temple to break the view of the new wing of Agrippa's palace.

Feelings were being aroused which played an important part in the closely following Jewish War of AD 66.

There was a shocking breakdown of law and order in the countryside and open armed hostility between the rival factions in the hierarchy. It was the first foreshadowing of the fearful destructive strife which was to add unprecedented venom to the ordeal of the coming rebellion, now a brief six or seven years away.

Festus knew that he could not afford to alienate or offend any collaborating elements in the Jewish population, and the problem presented him by the priestly elements who were determined to be rid of Paul must be weighed and appreciated in this context. Any perceptive governor could see that tension was fast mounting toward some sort of climax.

Herein lay the difference between Festus' position and that of Pilate some thirty years before, when the same hierarchy had sought to do away with an obviously innocent man. Events had seriously deteriorated since then. Nor was Festus damagingly compromised by past mismanagement of the difficult Jews, as Pontius Pilate was. He was none the less under orders to do his utmost to contain an explosive situation, and, in the light of this, A. P. Gould's contention that "Paul's appeal to Caesar is the lasting condemnation of Festus," is without validity. More fortunate than Pilate in his similar conflict of duties and considerations, Festus was offered a way of escape by the prisoner's own action. He offered Paul an acquittal on the major and relevant charge of sedition, and added the proposal, not unreasonable in normal times from the point of view of the occupying power, that the ex-Pharisee should face a religious investigation before his co-religionists.

It was a crisis for Paul. Perhaps with fuller information and sharper apprehension than the procurators, Paul saw the peril of the situation in Judaea, the deepening anarchy, and the looming crisis. He cut the knot, to Festus' relief, by the exercise of his Roman citizen's right of an appeal to Caesar. Festus was obliged by law to accept the appeal, and did so with enthusiasm. It solved his major problem, Paul's security. On the other hand, as a new arrival in Palestine, Jewish law and Jewish religion were unfamiliar to him. He had a career to make, and the lucidity and correct terminology of a document over his signature addressed to Rome's highest court might have been a matter of deep concern to him. Hence, the eagerness with which Festus availed himself of the aid of Agrippa II, an able man, an indispensable ally of Rome in the mounting difficulties of her rule, and a person with a close acquaintance with both Judaism and Christianity. To honour

where convenient the old Herodian house was also a policy as old as Augustus himself. Nowhere else in the records of 1st century history is so authentic a document of the empire in political action to be found.

The Appeal to Caesar.

Act 25:10Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

Paul regards the matter of his arrest and imprisonment to be a matter of civil rather than Jewish church law and so he appeals to Caesar.

Does Paul really think that he will get a fairer hearing in Rome than from the Jews or is he following the instruction of the Holy Spirit to get to Rome? You will be able to ask him one day.

I want to look at the Christian relationship to civil law and to what extent we have recourse to it. I would point out that there is a fundamental difference between the Old Testament structure and the New Testament structure regarding civil law. In the Old Testament church and state were one. *Deu 17:8 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; Deu 17:9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: Deu 17:10 And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: Deu 17:11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. Deu 17:12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. Deu 17:13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Deu 17:14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Deu 17:15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. Deu 17:16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Deu 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. Deu 17:18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: Deu 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days*

of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: Deu 17:20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Law aimed at being reconciled with God and man with man, love to God and neighbour. *Deu 21:1 If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: Deu 21:2 Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: Deu 21:3 And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; Deu 21:4 And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: Deu 21:5 And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried: Deu 21:6 And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: Deu 21:7 And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Deu 21:8 Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. Deu 21:9 So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.* The state and church were both under the obligation to the same code.

In the New Testament the church is not part of the state, it is subject to Christ and in consequence may have different principles or laws (i.e. homosexuality, abortion etc). It is not church/state really it is two separate kingdoms. *Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

Now there are many Christians who think that they are to be in total obedience to the state, even when it overrules Christian principles. Early Christians generally refused to take the Roman oath of allegiance, which required proclaiming "Caesar is Lord" (*Kaisar Kurios*) and offering incense to the emperor's image, as they viewed this as idolatry and a denial of their faith.

Refusal was considered treason. Failure to comply with the imperial cult was interpreted by Roman authorities as political rebellion and disloyalty to the state.

Refusal frequently led to punishment, including imprisonment, confiscation of property, and death.

The martyr Polycarp is a notable example, he refused to swear by the fortune of Caesar and renounce Christ, declaring his 86-year service to his own King.

"Jesus is Lord": Christians substituted the required oath with the confession *Iesous Kurios*, emphasizing that Jesus, not Caesar, held ultimate authority.

They made a distinction of allegiance. As articulated in the Biblical, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," they aimed to fulfil civic duties (like paying taxes) without pledging spiritual devotion to the state.

While it is true that God has in His providence set up the power of magistrates and that even unbelieving magistrates are there as part of God's purpose in Christ, they too are subject to God. *Rom 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Rom 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: Rom 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Rom 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

Men get into power because of God's plan, even Nero in Rome was set up by God, as was Pharaoh in Egypt. *Rom 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.*

If they bring about ungodly laws then the Christian must register his protest. *Act 4:18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. Act 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. Act 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* We may as a consequence suffer, but this is acceptable with God. *1Pe 2:19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 1Pe 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

The Christian is therefore not a "doormat" for injustice, but many will say "surely we should go the extra mile and turn the other cheek"?

Let us just look at those statements in context. *Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: Mat 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Mat 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. Mat 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Mat 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou*

away.

The passage as a whole is dealing with the abuse of the Mosaic Law. *Mat 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: Mat 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: Mat 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: Mat 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:*

Verse 30 in particular is dealing with the Lex Talionis (whence retaliation) *Mat 5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Exo 21:24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,*

This was not as many suppose a cruel imposition upon men, rather it was to stop cruel men imposing more than was right. It was a statute of limitation.

Later in Matthew Jesus tightens up the statute of limitation even further. It discourages revenge and resistance where the law has a right to be applied! *Mat 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

Again I reiterate, Christians should not be pacifist or passive in the face of injustice.

Now to address my final comments on the Christian in relationship to Believers and Unbelievers as regards civil law.

Law is becoming big business. It is a growing profession and people may use it for a number of reasons.

It has the dubious advantages of:

- Avoiding direct confrontation. (I.e. we tackle problems through third parties).
- It avoids reconciliation in adverse circumstances.

Sadly I note many Christians do not like facing problems and confronting fellow believers. They prefer to walk out or hide the problem.

Christians must solve their problems in the church with other Christians. *1Co 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 1Co 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 1Co 6:3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 1Co 6:4 If then ye have*

judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. If somebody damages your property it should be settled as brothers before believers, not before unbelievers.

Incidentally, I do not see the civil powers as having any authority in marriage. There are limits to civil powers, there are limits to church powers, that is no power to execute.

1. Marriage is an act of God. *Mat 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*
2. It can only be dissolved by God.
3. There is only one ground for it, fornication. *Mat 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.*

The state does not require this of its citizens but God requires it according to the pattern of the church.

With respect to unbelievers the Christian should always avoid pursing things through the courts. *Luk 12:58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.*

We should always strive to settle amicably because we should desire that the Gospel is not tainted by our personal problems. Our effort should not be directed to making worse enemies of our enemies.

Paul's appeal to Caesar is an appeal against civil injustice. It is also another step towards his goal.

Paul Appeals to Caesar to Avoid a Plot Against His Life.

Acts Chapter 24 ended with the transition from the governorship of Antonius Felix to that of Porcius Festus. Felix was undoubtedly a bad man, but history tells us Festus was a basically good man. He governed well, despite all the problems left to him by Felix.

The statement, "after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem" hints at good and energetic leadership of Festus. Upon arriving at Caesarea, the capital of the Judean province, he immediately made the trip to Jerusalem, probably the most important city of the province. Though it had been two years, the case of Paul was still important to the religious leaders. They hoped to make Paul appear before them again in Jerusalem.

We can see that Paul's generous imprisonment in Caesarea was actually a providential provision of protective custody against the murderous intentions of the religious leaders. It was also a season of rest and replenishment after his

years of hard missionary service, and time to prepare him for the challenges in the years ahead.

The religious leaders knew that Paul would be acquitted in any fair trial. Therefore, they didn't really want Paul to be put on trial again, they wanted to ambush and murder him before the trial could take place. Their actions show the danger of religion that is not in true contact with God. If your religion makes you a liar and a murderer, there is something wrong with your religion

"We see a growth of corruption. In Acts Chapter 23, where the plot to murder Paul was first launched, we find that it was the zealots who were responsible. Now, in Acts Chapter 25, we find that the leaders are initiating the very thing they were only tangentially involved in earlier." (Boice)

We don't know if Festus knew the intentions of the Jewish leaders or not. Either way, he refused to grant their request for a change of venue, and this was another way that God protected Paul. Festus was willing to put Paul on trial again, to resolve the matter. Yet he insisted that it would happen in Caesarea, not in Jerusalem.

Festus re-opens the trial in Caesarea.

Once again Paul was on trial before a Gentile ruler, accused by religious leaders. As before, Paul's life was in danger should he be found guilty. As before, the religious leaders made accusations without evidence against Paul. In response, Paul confidently rested on both the evidence and his apparent integrity.

Many in the Bible were the target of false accusations (such as Joseph and Daniel). Yet in another sense, every follower of Jesus is the target of false accusations by the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). Thankfully, Jesus is our defence against condemnation and false accusation (Romans 8:33-34).

Paul appeals his case to Caesar.

Though he was a good man, Festus also understood that it was important for him to have and keep a good relationship with the Jewish people of his province. Festus found it difficult to decide the case. Paul's standing as a Roman citizen apparently prevented Festus from commanding the trial to be moved to Jerusalem, so he asked Paul about this.

It's interesting to wonder if Festus knew of the plot to murder Paul or not. If he did know, then he knowingly asked Paul to walk into an ambush and be murdered. If he did not know, then he merely thought that this would please the religious leaders to have the trial in Jerusalem.

Paul saw through the plot against his life. Perhaps it was through supernatural knowledge, or perhaps through God-given common sense and deduction. Therefore, he demanded to stand trial before Caesar. Rightly and wisely, Paul wanted to avoid martyrdom if he could. He wasn't afraid to face the lions, but he didn't want to put his head in a lion's mouth if he could avoid it.

Paul's appeal made sense. He was convinced that the evidence was on his side and that he could win in a fair trial. He also had reason to wonder if his current judge (Festus) was sympathetic to his accusers, the religious leaders among the Jews.

It was the right of every Roman citizen to have his case heard by Caesar himself, after initial trials and appeals failed to reach a satisfactory decision. This was in effect an appeal to the supreme court of the Roman Empire.

Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice

Act 25:13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. Act 25:14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: Act 25:15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. Act 25:16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. Act 25:17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Act 25:18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: Act 25:19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Act 25:20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. Act 25:21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. Act 25:22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. Act 25:23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. Act 25:24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. Act 25:25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Act 25:26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. Act 25:27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

Before Paul can leave for Rome, King Herod Agrippa II and his sister come to visit Festus. Herod Agrippa II was the son of the first and better-known Herod Agrippa and the brother of Berenice, Mariamne, and Drusilla (second wife of the Roman procurator Antonius Felix) Their father was the Herod, who killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, and died, as this historian relates, by the judgment of God. At the death of his father, Agrippa was too young to succeed him in the throne, but he received from the emperor Claudius the kingdom of Chalcis, which was afterwards exchanged for other dominions. Bernice was first married to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, and after his decease, to Polemon, king of Cilicia, with whom her connexion was not of long continuance, for she soon returned to her brother, and was now living with him, under suspicion of an unlawful familiarity between them.

Festus having mentioned the case of Paul to Agrippa, the king expressed a desire to hear him. His curiosity would be gratified by seeing a man who had rendered himself so remarkable, first by his zeal for Judaism, and afterwards by his conversion to Christianity, and by receiving from him first hand a true and particular account of that which was the subject of so much conversation and discussion.

The new governor isn't as knowledgeable about the Jewish religion as Felix, whose wife was Jewish, had been. But, in his attempt to repair Rome's relationship with the Jews, Porcius Festus still wants to understand why the Jews are trying to kill Paul. He also knows it's absurd to send a man to trial in Rome with no official charges, so he asks Agrippa for advice.

Paul gives his testimony to King Agrippa. Unlike Felix, who wanted a bribe, or Festus, who doesn't understand much of what's going on, Agrippa immediately judges that Paul is completely innocent of any official wrongdoing. He tells Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar".

Paul's hearing before King Agrippa.

Herod Agrippa II ruled a client kingdom of the Roman Empire to the northeast of Festus' province. Agrippa was known as an expert in Jewish customs and religious matters. Though he did not have jurisdiction over Paul in this case, his hearing of the matter would be helpful for Festus, his great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus as a baby, his grandfather had John the Baptist beheaded; his father had martyred the first apostle, James. Now Paul stood before the next in line of the Herods, Herod Agrippa II.

Herod Agrippa II didn't rule over much territory, but he was of great influence because the Emperor gave him the right to oversee the affairs of the temple in Jerusalem and the appointment of the high priest.

Festus laid Paul's case before the king. Festus, new to his post and perhaps unfamiliar with Jewish traditions and customs, seemed to be somewhat confused by Paul's case. Therefore, even though there was not enough evidence to convict Paul, his investigation continued.

The case was probably confusing to Festus because of the lack of concrete evidence. But, of course there wasn't enough evidence to convict Paul of the accusations against him, because he had done no wrong! This was reason enough for acquittal.This appearance before King Agrippa was really a hearing, and not a trial, Agrippa did not have jurisdiction in the matter. Yet he could have an important influence upon Festus.

Festus explains the case involving Paul to the visiting King Agrippa.

The religious leaders hoped that Festus would decide against Paul without ever hearing Paul's defence. Festus appealed to the strong tradition and system of law. He would not condemn Paul without a fair trial. Festus was surprised, thinking that their accusations against Paul were unimportant. Their accusations

focused on matters of their religion and **a** certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

It is amusing to think of the religious leaders protesting to Festus that Paul won't stop talking about the risen Jesus, and hoping that the governor would make Paul stop.

The words "a certain Jesus" show that Festus didn't know much about Jesus. It is good to remember that the great and important people of Paul's day didn't know much about Jesus, and they had to be told. "Brethren, this is why we must keep on preaching Jesus Christ, because he is still so little known. The masses of this city are as ignorant of Jesus as Festus was." (Spurgeon)

The limited knowledge Festus did have regarding Paul's preaching shows that in his preaching, Paul emphasized the death and resurrection of Jesus. By implication, it also shows that Paul emphasized the cross. It's hard to believe that Festus knew that Paul preached that Jesus died, without also hearing about how Jesus died.

Agrippa's curiosity meant that Paul would have another opportunity to speak God's truth to a Gentile ruler. This would be the third such opportunity for Paul in (Felix, Festus, and now Agrippa).

Paul the prisoner is brought before Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus.

This was more than a hearing of evidence; it was an event. It was held in an auditorium, and all the commanders and the prominent men of the city were there. This was another tremendous opportunity for Paul.

At Festus' command Paul was brought in.

Festus wanted to use this trial to prepare an official brief for Paul's upcoming trial before Caesar. He simply could not send Paul to Caesar with a letter that said, "I really don't know what this man is accused of and he is probably innocent of any wrongdoing, but I thought I should send him to you anyway." That was no way to be popular with Caesar.

Paul was so innocent that Festus could not actually describe or specify the charges against him.

Acts Chapter 26.

Paul's Defence Before Agrippa

Act 26:1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: Act 26:2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Act 26:3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. Act 26:4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Act 26:5 Which knew me from the

beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. Act 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Act 26:7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Act 26:8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? Act 26:9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Act 26:10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. Act 26:11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Paul stood before the man whose great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus as a baby, his grandfather had John the Baptist beheaded and his father had martyred the first apostle, James. Agrippa's family history made him unlikely to receive Paul warmly.

Though he was a prisoner, Paul was happy to speak before Agrippa. First, because he was pleased to have the evidence of his case examined closely by the highest officials, but also because he was pleased to preach the gospel to kings and rulers.

In the auditorium in the city of Caesarea Paul spoke to Festus, Agrippa, Bernice, commanders of the Roman Legion, and all the prominent men of Caesarea (Acts 25:23). This was a tremendous opportunity, and Paul was certainly happy for that opportunity.

This was a partial fulfilment of what the Lord promised Paul at his conversion, *Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel*. (Acts 9:15)

Paul was born in Tarsus, several hundred miles from Jerusalem. Yet at a relatively young age he came to live at Jerusalem.
Not only was Paul a faithful Jew, but was known as a faithful man among the Jews, living according to the strictest sect **of** the Pharisees.

Paul made it clear that in both his heart and mind, he remained a faithful Jew. His trust in Jesus was an outgrowth of his trust in the hope of the promise made by God and he argued that for this hope's sake… I am accused by the Jews.

Since Agrippa was an expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews (Acts 26:3), he should have understood the belief that God could, or would, raise the dead.

Why should it be thought incredible that God can do anything? As Jesus said, with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Yet it should be especially easy for Agrippa to believe that God raises the dead, given some clear statements in the Old Testament (such as Job 19:25-27), the nature of God, and the intuitive grasp of the eternal among mankind.

Paul explains that at one time he persecuted the followers of Jesus.
Before his conversion, Paul believed he must persecute the followers of Jesus. Some he imprisoned, some he killed, and some he forced to renounce Jesus.

Paul later speaks of the great regret he had over his prior life as a persecutor (1 Corinthians 15:9, 1 Timothy 1:15). Perhaps the fact that he compelled them to blaspheme weighed especially on his conscience.

I cast my vote against them, this clearly implies that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, having a vote against Christians who were tried before the Sanhedrin (as Stephen was in Acts 7). If Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, it also means that at that time he was married, because it was required for all members of the Sanhedrin. Since as a Christian, he was single (1 Corinthians 7:7-9), it may mean that Paul's wife either died or deserted him when he became a Christian.

Before his conversion, Paul was an angry man. His great rage showed that his relationship with God was not right, despite his diligent religious observance.

Paul Tells of His Conversion

Act 26:12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, Act 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. Act 26:14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Act 26:15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Act 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Act 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, Act 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Act 26:19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: Act 26:20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Act 26:21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Act 26:22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: Act 26:23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. Act 26:24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. Act 26:25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. Act 26:26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. Act 26:27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Act 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Act 26:29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am,

except these bonds. Act 26:30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: Act 26:31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Act 26:32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Jesus reveals Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus.

This is Paul's fullest account yet of his experience on the Damascus Road. He first noted that he went on his mission of hate and persecution with the authority and commission of the same religious leaders who now accused him.

Paul literally saw the light before he figuratively saw the light. Paul went to Damascus supremely confident that he was right, it took a light brighter than the midday sun to show him he was wrong.

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. Paul repeats the words from Acts 9:3-6. These words emphasize:
· The personal appeal of Jesus (Saul, Saul).
· The misdirected nature of his persecution (Me).
· The folly of persecuting Jesus (Why).

I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. These words changed Paul's world. He immediately understood that Jesus was alive, not dead. He understood that Jesus reigned in glory instead of being damned in shame. He realized that in persecuting the followers of Jesus he persecuted Jesus, and in persecuting Jesus he fought against the God of his fathers.

Paul had to repent, to make a transformation of mind leading to transformed action – instantly. Paul lived a moral life, so he didn't have to repent of immorality, but of misguided religious zeal and wrong ideas about God.

Jesus commissions Paul right there on the road to Damascus.

Jesus called Paul up on his feet. This was not because his humility wasn't proper, but because he was sent to go somewhere, and he had to **ris**e and stand on his feet if he was going to go anywhere. This was a way to say, "Come now, let's be going."

The religious leaders sent Paul to Damascus for a purpose, with authority and commission. Now he must choose another purpose, the purpose of Jesus. Paul was commissioned to be a minister, which means he was to be a servant of the things which he had seen, and of the things which Jesus would yet reveal to him. The commission of the Christian is not to make the message or his testimony serve him, he is called to serve the message.
Paul was also called to be **a** witness of those things. The commission of the Christian is not to create experience or create the message, but to witness it and experience it. Jesus described the work Paul would do. At that moment on the road to Damascus Paul was blinded by the great light from heaven. His eyes were not yet opened physically, but Jesus sent him to open the eyes of others (both Jews and Gentiles).

Jesus then told Paul of four results that would come from the opening of the eyes:

· Being turned from darkness to light.

· Being turned from the power of satan to God.
· To receive forgiveness of sins.
· To receive an inheritance among God's people.

Among those who are sanctified by faith in Me. This was how Jesus described His followers, His people, His family. They are sanctified (set apart from sin and self), and they are sanctified by faith in Jesus (not by works or spiritual achievement, but by their connection of love and trust to Jesus).

The auditorium where Paul spoke was filled with important people and dignitaries, but we can imagine Paul speaking these words with special attention on and focus towards Agrippa. This was an invitation to Agrippa to become one of those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus. His eyes could be opened just as Paul's were on the road to Damascus.

Paul's obedience to Jesus.

I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Given the experience Paul just described, this was logical. No one should disobey the God who revealed Himself so powerfully. Paul made a strong case before Agrippa and all there as to why he preached and lived the way he did.

That they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. This is a neat summary of Paul's message. Paul sets repent and turn to God close, understanding them as two aspects of the same action. One can't turn to God unless they repent, and actions will confirm true repentance (doing works befitting repentance).

Paul summarizes his defence.

For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Paul plainly states the truth of the case. It was only because he sought to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles that the Jews seized him and tried to kill him. It wasn't because he was a political revolutionary or because he offended the sanctity of the temple.

Having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great: During his more than two years of confinement, Paul did receive help from God. Yet to that point it wasn't help that released him, it was help that gave him opportunity and ability to speak to small and great about who Jesus is and what Jesus had done.

This seems to have been fine with Paul. He was more interested in telling people about Jesus than in his personal freedom.

Saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come. Paul also stated his unswerving commitment to the same gospel, because that gospel was based solidly on the Word of God (the prophets and Moses) not on the traditions or spiritual experiences of man.

That the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles. These were the three main points to Paul's preaching: Jesus' death, His resurrection, and the preaching of this good news to the whole world, without respect to either Jew or Gentile.

The Response from Festus and Agrippa.

Festus asserts Paul is mad, and Paul responds.

Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.”

Paul was obviously an intelligent man, a man of much learning. Still, at this moment Festus thought he was crazy, saying this with a loud voice among all present. Given Paul’s conduct at this hearing, there are some reasons someone like Festus might think Paul was mad.

· Though a prisoner in chains, he said he was happy (Acts 26:2).
· He insisted that God could raise the dead (Acts 26:8, 23).
· He experienced a heavenly vision and changed his life because of it (Acts 26:14-19).
· He was more concerned about proclaiming Jesus than his personal freedom (Acts 26:22).
· He believed in a message of hope and redemption for all humanity, not only Jews or only Gentiles (Acts 26:23).

The gospel, when properly proclaimed and lived, will make some people think we are crazy. Paul put it this way, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Paul knew that not only his gospel was true, it was also reasonable. God may sometimes act above reason, but never contrary to reason.

Festus recently came from Rome, and perhaps didn’t know much of what had happened with Jesus and the early Christian movement. Yet King Agrippa did know, and Paul appealed to his knowledge of the open, historical events that were the foundation for Christian faith, things that were not done in a corner.

Paul’s message was characterized by truth and reason, because it was based on historical events (such as the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus), things which were not done in a corner, but open to examination.

The historical foundation of Paul’s message made it true. As for reason, it simply isn’t reasonable to ignore or deny things that actually happen. Who Jesus is and what He did must be accounted for.

Agrippa is almost persuaded to become a Christian.

Paul used Festus’ outburst to appeal to what King Agrippa knew (Acts 26:26). Then Paul brought the challenge directly to Agrippa, asking him: “do you believe?” Paul didn’t first ask Agrippa if he believed on Jesus; he asked, “Do you believe the prophets?” Paul did this because he knew that if Agrippa did believe

the prophets, and truth and reason would lead him to believe upon Jesus. He wanted to connect what Agrippa already believed to what he should believe.

With this, Paul brought the challenge and a point of decision directly to Agrippa. This is a good and often necessary part of the presentation of the message of who Jesus is and what He did for us, calling the listener to a decision.

You almost persuade me to become a Christian. When Paul called Agrippa to faith in the prophets and in Jesus, Agrippa refused to believe and to say he believed. Paul almost persuaded him.

However close Agrippa was to becoming a believer, it wasn't close enough. Agrippa's reply is especially sorry. Of course, almost being a Christian means that you almost have eternal life and will almost be delivered from the judgment of hell, but almost isn't enough.

Far from being admired for how far he had come, Agrippa condemned himself even more by admitting how close he has come to the gospel and how clearly he has understood it, while still rejecting it.

We may say that Paul recounted the words of Jesus on the road to Damascus, saying what a Christian is *Act 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.* Agrippa didn't want it.
· He didn't want to turn from darkness to light.
· He didn't want to turn from the power of satan to the power of God.
· He didn't want to receive forgiveness of sins.
· He didn't want a place among God's people.
· He didn't want to become one of those set apart by faith in Jesus.

What stopped Agrippa short? Why only almost become a Christian?
One answer was perhaps the person sitting next to him, Bernice. She was a sinful, immoral companion, and he may have rightly realized that becoming a Christian would mean losing her and his other immoral friends. He was unwilling to make that sacrifice.

On the other side of Agrippa sat Festus, a man's man, a man who thought Paul was crazy. Perhaps Agrippa thought, "I can't become a Christian. Festus will think I'm also crazy." Because he wanted the praise of men, he rejected Jesus. "Alas, how many are influenced by fear of men! Oh, you cowards, will you be damned out of fear? Will you sooner let your souls perish than show your manhood by telling a poor mortal that you defy his scorn? Dare you not follow the right though all men in the world should call you to do the wrong? Oh, you cowards! You cowards! How you deserve to perish who have not enough soul to call your souls your own, but cower down before the sneers of fools!" (Spurgeon)

In front of Agrippa was Paul, a strong man, a noble man, and man of wisdom and character, but a man in chains. Did Agrippa say, "Well, if I became a Christian, I might end up in chains like Paul or at the least, I would have to associate with him. We can't have that, I'm an important person." "O that men were wise enough to see that suffering for Christ is honour, that loss for truth is gain, that the truest dignity rests in wearing the chain upon the arm rather than endure the chain upon the soul." (Spurgeon)

I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains. Paul declared his continued trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He did not retreat from his stand one inch, despite his long imprisonment for the sake of the gospel. With a dramatic gesture, Paul showed that even though he was in chains, he had more freedom in Jesus than any of the royalty listening had.

Agrippa admits Paul's innocence, yet forwards him to Caesar.
Paul's direct challenge was too much for Agrippa, Festus, and the others on the platform. It was getting too close, to personal, and they felt they had to end it quickly by standing up and ending the proceedings.

This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains. Agrippa also saw there was no evidence offered to support the accusations against Paul, and he respected Paul's great integrity even while rejecting Paul's gospel. So, Agrippa and the others pronounced a "not guilty" verdict.

This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. Paul could not be set free, because he had appealed to Caesar. It seems that once an appeal was made, it could not be retracted. So, was Paul's appeal to Caesar a good thing or a bad thing?

Some people believe it was a bad thing, and that Paul was trusting in the power of the Roman legal system instead of in the power of God. They say that Paul might have been set free by Agrippa if he had not appealed to Caesar.

However, we should see the fulfilment of God's plan through all these events. By his appeal to Caesar, Paul will have the opportunity to preach to the Roman Emperor the way he had to Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, thus fulfilling the promise that Paul would bear My name before…kings (Acts 9:15).

The appeal to Caesar, and his subsequent journey to Rome at the Empire's expense, were also the fulfilment of the Holy Spirit's purpose that Paul should go to Rome (Acts 19:21, 23:11). This also answered a long-standing desire in the heart of Paul to visit the already present Christian community there (Romans 1:9-13).

Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Rom 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. Rom 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; Rom 1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Acts Chapter 27.

We start the final two chapters of Acts and will begin our journey to Rome at last.

Paul Sails for Rome

Act 27:1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. Act 27:2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. Act 27:3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. Act 27:4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. Act 27:5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. Act 27:6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. Act 27:7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; Act 27:8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. Act 27:9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, Act 27:10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Act 27:11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. Act 27:12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

Notice Luke who has been quietly in the background and was not a prisoner is back on the journey.

From Caesarea to Fair Havens.

Paul and his companions leave Caesarea.

So Paul will sail to Italy with other prisoners under the command of Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was also with them.

Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment, we don't know much about this specific Augustan Regiment (several held that title), but it was common for Roman soldiers to accompany the transport of criminals, those awaiting trial, and merchant ships filled with grain going from Egypt to Rome.

Aristarchus and Luke (notice the us of verse 2 and beyond) accompanied Paul on this voyage. The favour Paul enjoyed from Julius meant he was allowed to take these companions with him.

The first part of the journey was from Caesarea to Fair Havens.

Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care. The ship first sailed to Sidon, where Paul met with Christians and could receive care from them. The Roman commander gave Paul a lot of liberty because he wasn't a condemned man (yet), but waiting for trial before Caesar. Paul's godly character and display of Christian love were also helpful in gaining favour.

Paul was different from the other prisoners on board. The other prisoners were probably all condemned criminals being sent to Rome to die in the arena.

The ship was an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy. This was probably a grain freighter, taking grain grown in Egypt to Italy. According to Hughes, the typical grain freighter of that period was 140 feet long and 36 feet wide. It had one mast with a big square sail, and instead of what we think of as a rudder, it steered with two paddles on the back part of the ship. They were sturdy, but because of its design, it couldn't sail into the wind.

The ship began to make its way west, eventually coming to the port called Fair Havens on the south side of the island of Crete.

There are a lot of technical sailing and weather references from here on in, not my strong suit I am afraid.

Paul's advice to the captain and crew of the ship.

Sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over. The Fast date in question here was probably October 5, which was the date of the Day of Atonement in A.D. 59. The idea is that as winter approached, the weather became more dangerous for sailing.

"The dangerous season for sailing began about September 14 and lasted until November 11; after the latter date all navigation on the open sea came to an end until winter was over." (Bruce)

Paul advised them, saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives". Paul did not necessarily speak here as a prophet of God, but perhaps as an experienced traveller on the Mediterranean, having already travelled some 3,500 miles by sea. Knowing the seasons and conditions and perhaps with supernatural wisdom Paul advised that they not go on.

2Co 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 2Co 11:26 In journeyings often, in perils of

waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; This tells us that by this time, Paul had already shipwrecked three times. He, like almost everyone, knew that sailing in this season was dangerous.

Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. And because the harbour was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbour of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest and winter there.

It isn't a surprise that the centurion had more respect for the opinion of the chief sailor and the owner of the ship than for Paul's opinion. They both had much to lose if the ship didn't make it to Rome.

The name Fair Havens was not entirely accurate, at least not accurate in the winter. The position of the bay made it vulnerable to winter winds and storms. It was not an ideal place to wait out the coming season.

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It was also not a fun place to spend all winter, and the crew of the ship didn't look forward to months in a small town. One commentator suggests that the local Chamber of Commerce named the place "Fair Havens."

The majority advised to set sail from there also. Taking a vote of the crew, they decided to sail on to the harbour of Phoenix. The port at Phoenix was on the same island of Crete and only about 40 miles away. It didn't seem crazy to them to make it to Phoenix and be spared a miserable winter at Fair Havens.

Yet they failed to properly regard the wise words from the Apostle Paul, which turned out to be prophetic. This voyage will end with disaster and much loss. They should have listened to Paul, and later he told them so.

Paul's Goal

Paul is now well on his way to Rome and the account now takes a detailed look at this journey. It seems quite remarkable that Holy Scripture should make so much of a sailing voyage and in particular a shipwreck.

Let us first look at the practical aspects of such a journey. These were the days before compasses and navigational instruments. It wasn't until the 1500's that a practical compass was developed and even then navigation was a bit hit and miss. Generally you sailed along a line of latitude until you hit land. It wasn't until 1714 that a revolutionary timepiece called a chronometer enabled reasonably accurate position reckoning. John Harrison 1729 – 60, a self taught Yorkshire carpenter won £20,000 from the British Government for his clock that enabled position to be calculated to thirty nautical miles of longitude after a six week journey (this is an accuracy of 3 seconds a day).

Once you were out of sight of land in Paul's day, you could be anywhere and you were out of contact with shore because they had no means of signalling. In addition you had no meteorological office to give you a weather forecast, so you could be caught out in violent weather as happened here. We live in a wonderful world of satellites, TV's and telephones, and we have instant information and reasonable predictions which these old time sailors never could have imagined.

The ships were also poor by today's standards. Generally a single sail provided the propulsion and steering by two oars at the Stern. It was the Portuguese I believe who eventually developed sails that enable us to sail into the wind (tacking) rather than running.

Paul gives us a lovely picture in Ephesians of a believer who has no anchor, blown about at the mercy of the winds of Doctrine. *Eph 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

Here then is the boat and crew and passengers and prisoners, some 276 people on a large wooden plank. The journey is quite late in the year and it is suggested by some that the fast in verse 9 was the Day of Atonement. This puts the time around October. Having arrived at Crete Paul advises that it was a dangerous time to sail, but then what does a tent maker know about sailing! Here we have a challenge to the experts and I suspect that the experts, the owner and helmsmen may well have been motivated by other considerations.

This is certainly true with evolution, the experts are certainly motivated by other considerations (i.e. faith in an idea, position etc).

It does not appear that Paul's perception is prophecy, rather it is good sound common sense. He is after all a seasoned traveller around the Mediterranean! He does not throw caution to the wind even though he must get to Rome, and his revelation from God makes him the expert!

So they sail on a southerly breeze to find a winter port at Phenice, when they are hit by a hurricane.

There was no way that they could sail against it and so they ran with it out of control. They had a breathing space in the lee of Clauda Island and gained some control. The main fear of sinking due to the planks springing apart was reduced by frapping or wrapping cables around the hull to hold it together. They lower the sail but were fearful of hitting the quick sands of Syrtis. To gain buoyancy they began jettisoning cargo and then ships gear.

Paul takes the opportunity to rub in the mistake, but it all works for good and he has the comfort of God's word and purpose. You see God doesn't always let us travel club class in this life! He often gives us a wretched journey because it gives us character and backbone.

After fourteen nights the word is fulfilled and they hit the Island of Malta (miss that and you've got a long walk home).

The sailors on board slaved and stopped the ship with anchors in the bay so that they could see the ship. To lose the sailors was to lose the ship and endangered the whole of God's plan. Paul by now has clearly got "beach cred" and the centurion readily cuts the boat adrift to keep them on board.

By dawns early light Paul encourages all on board, witnessing his faith in his God. How many I wonder on that voyage became his brother in Christ through his confidence and faith in God.

So they cut the anchors, let down the steering oars and ran the ship aground. Because they obeyed God and because there was Paul on board all were saved.

I might in closing allegorise this sea journey of Paul's and liken it to life with Christ, the helmsman of our faith. We shall sail through storms and tempest, but we shall have peace knowing our journeys end in Christ. What happens on the way one day I am sure will no longer matter.

The Storm at Sea.

Act 27:13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. Act 27:14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. Act 27:15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. Act 27:16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: Act 27:17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. Act 27:18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; Act 27:19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. Act 27:20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. Act 27:21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. Act 27:22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. Act 27:23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Act 27:24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Act 27:25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Act 27:26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. Act 27:27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; Act 27:28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. Act 27:29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. Act 27:30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea,

under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Act 27:31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Act 27:32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. Act 27:33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Act 27:34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. Act 27:35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Act 27:36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. Act 27:37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. Act 27:38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

The Stormy Journey From Fair Havens to Malta.

When the south wind blew softly the weather looked favourable, so they set out from Fair Havens. Just beyond Crete, the wind turned dangerous.

This Euroclydon wind was feared among ancient sailors for its destructive power. Helpless to navigate with this wind in their face, all they could do is let her drive.

The skiff was normally towed behind the boat, but taken aboard at bad weather, so they brought it in and secured it.

We secured the skiff with difficulty may be quite literal from Luke's perspective. The doctor was probably pressed into service pulling ropes.

Measures were taken to save the ship.
These were normal emergency measures, helping to prevent the ship from breaking apart in a storm.

The fear of crashing on the Sytris Sands (an infamous wrecking area of ships off the coast of North Africa) made them go with the wind and give up hope of navigating the ship in the storm.

They lightened the ship… threw the ship's tackle overboard. These were the final two things done to help save the ship, first throwing over the cargo and then the ship's equipment. Even with this, the ship continued to drive in the wind for many days.

When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days. On the open sea they could only navigate with either the sun or the stars. Many days in this storm drove the crew to desperation. The great tempest drove them blind westward across the Mediterranean.

All hope that we would be saved was finally given up, this tells us there were 276 people on board, both passengers and crew. It seems that they had all finally given up, and had no hope of survival.

Paul tells the crew to take heart.
After long abstinence from food, we shouldn't assume that the sailors fasted and sought God. Instead, their abstinence from food probably was due to the poor condition of the food and seasickness.

Men, you should have listened to me. Paul could not resist an "I told you so" moment. Had they listened to his wisdom, they would not be in this seemingly hopeless situation. As a messenger of God, Paul hoped to bring hope to these passengers and crew who had given up all hope. His point wasn't simply to tell them he was right, but to bring them good news.

There will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. This was a mixed message. The promise that no life would be lost was hard to believe if the ship were to be lost. It was also bad news to hear that the voyage would be a complete financial loss, with the cargo already overboard and the ship to be lost.

Paul tells the crew of the angelic visit.
There stood by me this night an angel. God sent an angelic messenger to Paul to bring good, encouraging news when all else seemed hopeless. This wasn't a direct appearance of Jesus (as in Jerusalem, Acts 23:11), but of an angel. God's word came to Paul different ways at different times.

An angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve. The angelic presence was an encouragement. Paul remembered that he belonged to God and that he served God. God never forgets those who belong to Him and serve Him. That doesn't mean everything goes easily for those who belong to God and serve Him. Paul's present calamity proved that. It does mean that God's watchful eye and active care is present even in that kind of trouble.

Do not be afraid. There was a reason Paul needed to hear this. He was also afraid in the storm (at least some of the time). In his strong moments, Paul knew he would make it to Rome because God promised it. Yet in the storm (here, a literal storm) it was easy to doubt and Paul needed the assurance.

Indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you. This implies that Paul sought God for the safety of everyone on the ship. He already had a promise for his own safety, but that wasn't enough for Paul. He laboured in prayer for the safety and blessing of those with him, believers and not-yet-believers. Paul cared for them and loved them, and he laboured for them in prayer until God granted the apostle their safety.

Paul encouraged the men to take heart just a moment before and he repeats the encouragement again, this time in light of the revelation from God. "You have reason to take heart, God has given me assurance of your safety, and **I** believe God."

Paul couldn't keep his hope to himself. He had to pass it on to both the believers on board the ship and to those who had not yet believed. Paul's confident words to the troubled sailors on a storm-tossed ship express the essence of what it means to put our faith in God and His Word. God said it to Paul (through an angel) and Paul said, "I believe God." He didn't say, "I believe in God." Every demon in hell agrees with the existence of God. Paul declared his total confidence in God's knowledge of his situation and His promise in his situation.

Paul believed God when there was nothing else to believe. He couldn't believe the sailors, the ship, the sails, the wind, the centurion, human ingenuity or anything else, only God. This was not a fair-weather faith, he believed God in the midst of the storm, when circumstances were at their worst. Paul would say along with Job, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him (Job 13:15). The storm and the danger were real, but God was more real to Paul than the dreadful circumstances.

Paul was not ashamed to say that he believed God. "I would to God that all Christians were prepared to throw down the gauntlet and to come out straight; for if God be not true let us not pretend to trust him, and if the gospel be a lie let us be honest enough to confess it." (Spurgeon)

Paul's unshakable confidence in God made him a leader among men, even though he was a prisoner of Rome.

However, we must run aground on a certain island. This was mixed news, and in these circumstances to run aground might be fairly called to shipwreck. Paul essentially said, "We're all going to be shipwrecked on an unknown island, but everyone will be alright."

A certain island means that God did not tell Paul everything about what was going to happen. Paul had to trust that God knew which island they would run aground on, even if Paul didn't know.

When the fourteenth night had come, shows us that they spent two entire weeks in the misery and terror of the storm. Sensing land was near (probably by hearing the breakers in the distance) the sailors took proper precautions against being crashed against some unknown rocks (they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come). The threat of shipwreck and death made them men of prayer.

As the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship. These sailors didn't care for the passengers. Seeing a chance to save their own lives in the darkness, they hoped to abandon the ship leaving the passengers.

Paul knew two reasons why they had to stay together. Firstly, the ship's passengers desperately needed the crew's expertise, and it would be fatal if the crew abandoned the passengers. Secondly, Paul probably sensed that God's promise to give him the lives of the whole ship's company assumed that they would stay together.

At this point, it seems the soldiers had great trust in Paul.
Paul had a word of faith and confidence from the Lord for the frightened crew and passengers. God has scores of promises of His comfort and care for us in desperate times, but they only benefit us if we believe them. There are hints that Paul regarded this meal as communion at the Lord's Table for the Christians present.

Throwing out the wheat into the sea reflected their great desperation. This was the last of the essential cargo of the ship, after they had already lightened the ship once. This was a struggle for survival.

The Shipwreck.

Act 27:39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. Act 27:40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. Act 27:41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. Act 27:42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. Act 27:43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: Act 27:44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

The ship finally runs aground and breaks apart.
They did not know it at first, but they came to an island called Malta. The place where the ship came aground is now called St. Paul's Bay.

"If they missed Malta, there would have been nothing for it but to hold on for 200 miles until they struck the Tunisian coast, and no one could have expected the ship to survive that long." (Bruce)

The prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. As the ship was grounded on shore, the still-stormy sea pounded the weakened vessel and started breaking it apart. All on board had to jump ship or be broken up with it.

And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. To the soldiers, it made sense to kill the prisoners, because according to Roman military law a guard who allowed his prisoner to escape was subject to the same penalty the escaped prisoner would have suffered, in the case of most of these prisoners, death.

God gave Paul favour in the eyes of the Roman centurion, and that favour kept Paul and all the prisoners alive in fulfilment of the word spoken to Paul, God has granted you all those who sail with you. God's word never fails.

Act 27:43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: Act 27:44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

Acts Chapter 28.

Paul on Malta

Act 28:1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called

Melita. Act 28:2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. Act 28:3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. Act 28:4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. Act 28:5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Act 28:6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. Act 28:7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. Act 28:8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. Act 28:9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: Act 28:10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

These experienced sailors would certainly have known the island of Malta, but not this side of the island. Almost all the traffic to Malta came to the main port, on the other side, they didn't recognize this side of the island.

Luke wrote as someone who experienced the kindness of the Malta natives and the cold and wet of the storm. The meaning of the name Malta is somewhat disputed, depending on if the name is rooted in the language of the ancient Phoenicians or the ancient Greeks. If the name is rooted in early Greek, it probably has the sense of "honey" because of beekeeping on the island. But if the name is rooted in language of the ancient Phoenicians, it probably has the sense of "refuge."

Paul and the snakebite.

The great apostle gathered wood for the fire, even though there were probably scores of people among the 276 passengers and crew far more suited for the job. Paul's servant heart was always evident. Paul was faithful to God and living as a true servant. But this did not keep him from this trial. His humble service brought out a viper, and the viper didn't just nibble on Paul, it fastened on his hand.

Paul's reaction seemed calm and unconcerned. He shook off the creature into the fire. The natives were convinced that justice had finally caught up with this prisoner. Justice is actually a reference to the Greek goddess of justice, Dikee. The natives, knowing Paul was a prisoner, assumed he committed a great crime, and the goddess of justice would not permit Paul to escape unpunished.

God didn't preserve Paul from the storm just to let him perish by a snake. Paul was protected. It was promised he would go to Rome (*you must also bear witness at Rome*, Acts 23:11), and Paul wasn't at Rome yet. It wasn't so much that nothing would stop Paul as it was that nothing would stop God's promise from being fulfilled. Paul could take God's past faithfulness as a promise of future blessing and protection.

By extension, we also see that “Divine Justice” had no more claim against Paul, it had all been satisfied by Jesus’ work on the cross. God’s justice could never harm Paul, nor anyone who has had all his or her sins paid for by the work of Jesus on the cross.

The natives said that he was a god. This is a typically human reaction. For these natives, Paul had to be seen in extremes. Either he was terribly evil or considered a god.

Paul heals the father of Publius, and many others.
The leading citizen of the island… who received us and entertained us courteously for three days: This was a great blessing and a strong contrast to the misery of the previous two weeks at sea. God gave Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus a season of relief and replenishment.

This “is the exact technical term for the person who represented Rome in that place, it is another example of Luke’s extraordinary accuracy.” (Boice)

The father of Publius lay sick of fever and dysentery. Some think this was a malady known as Malta fever, which comes from a microorganism found in the milk of Maltese goats. Its symptoms usually last about four months. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. God healed this man, yet it happened through the willingness and activity of Paul. God did the work, but Paul made himself ready and available for the work.

The rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. Soon, the work Paul did went to many others. This word for healed is not the customary word for a miraculous healing. The word more literally means, “to receive medical attention.” It may be that Luke (who was a physician) served as a medical missionary on Malta.

Paul Arrives at Rome.

Act 28:11And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. Act 28:12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. Act 28:13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: Act 28:14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. Act 28:15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. Act 28:16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

This is the final part of Paul’s journey towards Rome after they spent three months on Malta, gathering strength and waiting for the winter to end.

Landing at Syracuse. This was the first stop from Malta. Syracuse was a famous city in the ancient world, being the capital city of the island of Sicily. Archimedes,

the famous mathematician, had lived at Syracuse. When the Romans conquered the island, a soldier put a dagger to his throat as he worked on a maths problem, drawing in the dirt. Archimedes said, “Stop, you’re disturbing my circles!” and the soldier killed him.

Rhegium… Puteoli… and so we went toward Rome. As Paul and the others made their way northward up the Italian peninsula, they spent time with fellow followers of Jesus they met along the way. Eventually they were greeted outside Rome by Christians from the city who came to meet them. They honoured Paul by greeting him as the emperors were greeted when they arrived at Rome, they went out to meet him as he came into the city, walking the long journey (about 43 miles or 69 kilometres) to the Appii Forum to welcome Paul and his companions.

They had received Paul’s famous letter to the Romans a few years before, so they probably felt like they knew him already and they certainly wanted to honour him. In light of the love and honour behind this greeting, no wonder that Paul thanked God and took courage.

“Luke is far from giving the impression that Paul was the first person to bring the gospel to Rome… the presence of those Christians, the brothers, as Luke calls them, provides evidence enough that the gospel had reached Rome already.” (Bruce) There were Jewish people from Rome present at Peter’s preaching on Pentecost many years before (Acts 2:10), so there had probably been Christians from and in Rome from the beginning.

One could say that they treated Paul as if he were a king. “It was a custom when an emperor visited a city for the people to go out and meet him and escort him back into the city.” (Horton)

Paul’s status as a prisoner in Rome.

When we came to Rome. Finally, the promise of Jesus was fulfilled. Paul determined that he would go to Rome as early as his third missionary journey (Acts 19:21, Romans 1:15). At Jerusalem, Jesus promised Paul he would make it to Rome (Acts 23:11) and repeated the promise during the two weeks of storm at sea (Acts 27:23-25).

When Paul came to Rome, the city had existed for almost 800 years. The famous Coliseum was not yet built, but the prominent buildings were the temple of Jupiter, the palaces of Caesar, and a temple to Mars (the god of war). At the time, Rome had a population of about two million, a million slaves, and a million free. Society was divided into roughly three classes, a small upper class, a large class of the poor, and slaves.

The centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. This was a happy moment for Julius the centurion, who fulfilled his duty and successfully brought all the prisoners from Caesarea to Rome.

Paul wasn’t held in a normal prison. He was allowed to dwell by himself and provide his own living space (a rented house according to Acts 28:30). He was constantly under the supervision of a Roman guard, and the rotation of the guards gave him a constant supply of people to talk to.

Paul in Rome

Act 28:17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Act 28:18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. Act 28:19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. Act 28:20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. Act 28:21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. Act 28:22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. Act 28:23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. Act 28:24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. Act 28:25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Act 28:26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: Act 28:27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Act 28:28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. Act 28:29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. Act 28:30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Act 28:31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Paul appeals to the Jewish community of Rome.

Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. Paul followed his consistent practice of going to the Jews first in every city he came to as an evangelist. It took him only three days to have a meeting with the leaders of the Jews in Rome.

Paul wanted them to know that he had not forsaken Israel and that they were still brethren to him. As Paul explained to the crowd on the temple mount at the beginning of this ordeal, I am a indeed a Jew (Acts 22:3). I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers. Paul wanted them to know that he was innocent of any crime against the law or the Jewish people.

When they had examined me they wanted to let me go. Paul wanted them to know that the Romans were ready and willing to release him. Paul wanted them to know that he did not make a counter-suit or accusation against the Jewish leadership that had accused him. Paul wanted them to know that he was a prisoner because of his belief in Israel’s Messiah, the hope of Israel.

As the year A.D. 70 approached, time was running out before an unparalleled national calamity struck a Jesus-rejecting Israel. In 10 years or so it would be clear that Jesus was the hope of Israel, yet a hope that many of them rejected.

The Jewish leaders respond to Paul.
We neither received letters from Judea concerning you. This demonstrates that the religious leaders who accused Paul in Jerusalem and Caesarea knew their case was hopeless. They made no effort to send ahead documents confirming their case against him.

Nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. Paul wanted to know what they heard from Jerusalem about him. The Jewish people of Rome had not yet heard anything about Paul. Though they did not know anything about Paul, they had heard that Christianity was unpopular among some, being spoken against everywhere. They should be complimented on wanting to hear the story from Paul himself.

In what must have been a wonderful time of teaching, Paul spoke of the kingdom of God, and gave an exhaustive study of how the Old Testament spoke of Jesus, from morning till evening and testified of the kingdom of God. In speaking of the kingdom of God, Paul undoubtedly taught what Jesus taught, that in Jesus God brought a spiritual kingdom that would take root in men's hearts before it took over the governments of this world. Most of the Jewish people of Jesus' day and of Paul's day looked for a political kingdom, not a spiritual kingdom.

Some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. In response to this remarkable, day-long teaching from Paul, some believed and trusted Jesus. Others did not, and disbelieved. Even the best teaching from the best apostle in the best circumstances could not persuade them.

Paul explains the rejection of the gospel from Isaiah.
Isa 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. Isa 6:9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Isa 6:10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

When they did not agree among themselves. This suggests that those who were persuaded and those who disbelieved started arguing among themselves. They departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers." Paul understood that Isaiah prophesied of their hardness of heart. Certainly, Paul was happy that some received the gospel, but he was undoubtedly distressed if even one of them rejected Jesus.

This message from Isaiah is just as true today as it was when Isaiah first said it, or when Paul quoted it. Many hear and reject simply because they don't want to turn to God and be healed of their sin.

Paul tells them he will take the message of salvation to the Gentiles**.** If some of them rejected the salvation of God, it did not make that salvation of no effect. It just meant that God would find those who would hear it, in this case, the Gentiles.

Paul begged for men to receive Jesus, but not as a beggar might plead. Paul ached not for himself, but for those who rejected and solemnly warned those who rejected of the consequences.

The preacher of the gospel really preaches two messages. To those who respond to the gospel with faith, he is a messenger of life. But to those who reject Jesus, the preacher adds to their condemnation. *To the one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life to life.* (2 Corinthians 2:16). This mixed group, some who believed, some who did not, left Paul arguing with each other.

In just a few years after Paul's rebuke of those Jews who rejected Jesus, the Jewish people of Judea were slaughtered wholesale and Jerusalem was destroyed. God's judgment was coming, and part of Paul's frustration was that he sensed this.

Paul spends two years in Rome before his trial in Caesar's court.

Paul spent more than two years at Caesarea waiting for his case to be resolved. Now he spent another two years waiting for his case to be heard before Caesar.

Probably, Paul continued his work as a tentmaker (leatherworker) to supply the rent for his house. Paul was always a hard-working man. Although Paul could not travel, he could teach and preach to all who came to him and this he did. He also wrote letters, we have these two years of Roman custody to thank for the letters to the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Colossians.

God didn't waste Paul's time in Rome. God never wastes our time, though we may waste it by not sensing God's purpose for our lives at the moment.

In the last verse we see Paul speaking of Jesus no one forbidding him. This has the idea of completely unhindered. Paul's chains and custody mattered nothing. The word of God was unhindered.

As Paul came to Rome, the sea, the soldiers, and the snake all threatened his life. But God delivered him from them all. Through Paul, God shows that God's man, fulfilling God's will, cannot be stopped, though all kinds of difficulty may come in the way.

Finally, even the disbelief of some of the Jews or anyone else's rejection of Jesus will not hinder the gospel. The gospel will go forth and find those who will believe.

We don't know why Luke did not record Paul's appearance before Caesar and for me this is most frustrating end, we don't see the meeting with Caesar or know what happens to Luke?

The book of Acts has an open ended conclusion and it is also very encouraging. It is not the whole story of what happened to Paul the Apostle. *Php 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me*

have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; Php 1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; Php 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. These verses indicate that Paul had already been before the praetorium or Roman court and is still at liberty. The rest of his life and his death are mere conjecture.

The book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, rather than detailing his trial or death. This intentional, open-ended conclusion emphasizes that the story is not a biography of Paul, but a chronicle of the "unhindered" spread of the gospel. It signifies that the mission continues through believers today, showing the unstoppable progress of God's kingdom from Jerusalem to Rome.

Key reasons for the abrupt ending include:

- Focus on the message, not the messenger. Luke brings the focus to the expansion of the gospel into the heart of the Roman Empire, not the ultimate fate of Paul.
- The Keyword "Unhindered". The final Greek word, *akōlytōs* ("unhindered" or "without restraint"), serves as a victorious declaration that the Gospel is spreading despite Paul's imprisonment.
- Symbolism of the Move to Rome. By reaching Rome, the, narrative has accomplished its primary goal. The focus was on the spread of the movement to the ends of the earth.
- Encouraging Continuation**.** The ending compels readers to see themselves as part of the ongoing story.
- **L**eaving the story open for the next chapter.

While some scholars have suggested that Luke died before finishing or planned a third volume, the most widely accepted view is that the open-ended nature of the text is a deliberate theological choice to highlight that the church's mission continues.

And that means it is now down to us, to you and me to take up the mantle and continue this good work. He set us a good example to follow.

I would take a verse from Romans as Paul's memorial. It sums up the man and his life, or rather the life that began on the Damascus Road. *Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,*